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**RECORDS MANAGEMENT IN THE ENGLISH NEW TOWNS
1961-1999**

BY

DAVID ROBERT BIGGS

**A Thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the Faculty of Arts of the University of London**

**School of Library, Archive and Information Studies
University College London
August 2007**



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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

This thesis illustrates and examines issues, situations and concepts which faced, and still face, archivists and records managers dealing with the records of finite, changing and disappearing organisations. Using the lessons and conclusions that can be drawn from the case study, the thesis develops a strategy and recommendations for how records management should ideally be applied to such situations.

British new towns result from the large-scale government planning project launched in the New Towns Act, 1946, although there are antecedents. The case study involves prodigious quantities of modern records of relevant central government organisations, held within those organisations or in national and local archive repositories. It demonstrates various types of organisational change, the development and implementation of records management policy and practice, and other issues of concern to those dealing with all stages of the records life cycle.

The thesis focuses on the Commission for the New Towns (CNT) which from 1961 was the residuary body for the development corporations of the twenty one English new towns, and Cwmbran in Wales. In 1998 CNT was given responsibility for eight urban development corporations and named as the residual body for the six housing action trusts for when they closed from 1999 onwards. The source material concludes when CNT was combined in 1999 with the Urban Regeneration Agency to operate as English Partnerships.

The records held by CNT and associated bodies largely date after 1946, but are not exclusively modern as corporations inherited records from predecessor authorities and acquired old property deeds. The study examines how CNT and associated bodies handled these records, the impetus for organised records management, how resources were applied, and the results achieved. The effects of organisational trends and change, technological developments, the attitude and influence of individuals and external bodies, and legislative requirements are analysed.

The particular facts of the case study are established, and related more widely to the issues facing those involved in managing, disposing of, or receiving records in and from changing, finite and disappearing organisations. The thesis concludes by summarising the lessons learned from the case study and in offering recommendations for the management of records in this context.

**Records Management in the English New Towns
1961-1999**

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS and DEDICATION

A study is not undertaken in isolation, or completed without the co-operation, support and encouragement of others. I thank my employer for allowing me to undertake the doctorate and for assistance provided. My thanks to all work and professional colleagues who shared their knowledge, memories, opinions and records.

I am grateful to the School of Library, Archive and Information Studies (SLAIS) at University College London (UCL) for accepting me as a student. The support, interest, and camaraderie of those academic and administrative staff and members of the Research Seminar Group (RSG) with whom I came into contact was welcome. I am indebted to my tutors, Dr Anne Thurston, Dr Elizabeth Shepherd, and Miss Elizabeth Danbury, for their support and encouragement. Their rigorous analysis, queries, positive criticism, useful suggestions and unending enthusiasm, helped to improve my work and stimulate my mind.

My thanks to Miss Sophie Philipson for her patient assistance with proof-reading the text, and to Professor John McIlwaine for advising on the format of the Bibliography. Finally, my gratitude to family and friends for support and goodwill shown throughout the course of my studies. Especial thanks to my parents, to whom I dedicate this thesis.

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is all my own work and that I have acknowledged all my sources.

DAVID ROBERT BIGGS

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Note: Where an acronym refers to multiple organisations or a general term, rather than to a single body or proper name, the explanation appears in lower case. For example, “HAT - housing action trust” indicates that there are several housing action trusts and it is not referring to a single entity called The Housing Action Trust. However, the acronym for a specific HAT is explained by the use of capital letters as in “WFHAT - Waltham Forest Housing Action Trust”.

ACA	Association of County [later Chief] Archivists.
ADRO	Association of Departmental Record Officers.
AGM	annual general meeting.
aka	also known as.
ARMA	Association of Records Managers and Administrators [USA].
BCDC	Black Country Development Corporation.
BDM	Britannia Data Management.
BHP	Byron Hartley and Penrose [solicitors].
BS	British Standard.
BSI	British Standards Institution.
CAO	Chief Administrative Officer.
CBHA	community based housing association.
CBX	Central Business Exchange, Milton Keynes.
CCTA	Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency.
CD (-ROM)	compact disc (-Read Only Memory).
CDL	Consortium Developments Limited.
CEC	Commission’s Executive Committee [at CNT, 1960s-1980s].
CEO	Chief Estates Officer.
CFO	Chief Finance Officer.
CIF	Community Investment Fund [of URA].
CILIP	Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals.
CLAIRE	Contaminated Land Applications in Real Environments [of URA].
CLDC	Central Lancashire Development Corporation.
CLNT	Central Lancashire New Town.
CNT	Commission for the New Towns [acronym generally used 1980 onwards].
co	company.

COC	Chief Officers' Committee [at Bracknell Development Corporation].
comp	compiled.
CRA	community related asset.
CRX	Central Region Executive Management Meeting [at CNT Central Office, 1994-1998. Name continued for meeting of staff within Milton Keynes Office of CNT and EP dealing with former central region matters, 1998 to date].
DC	development corporation.
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government.
DETR	Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions.
DETS	Director of Estates and Technical Services [at CNT, 1982-1992].
DFALS	Director of Finance, Administration and Legal [at CNT, 1982-1992].
DGM	Deputy General Manager.
DJC	Docklands Joint Committee.
DLG	Derelict Land Grant Scheme.
DoE	Department of the Environment.
DPMS	Director of Personnel and Management Services.
DRO	Departmental Record Officer.
DTI	Department of Trade and Industry.
DTLR	Department of Transport, Local Government, and the Regions.
DVD	digital video disc.
EDM(S)	electronic document management (system).
EDRM(S)	electronic document and records management (system).
EEF	English Environment Fund [of URA].
EMB	Executive Management Board [of English Partnerships].
EMG	Executive Management Group [of CNT, 1992-1999].
EO	Executive Officer [at CNT].
EP	English Partnerships.
ERM	electronic records management.
EU	European Union.

FMG	Statement of Financial and Management Guidance for the Commission for the New Towns [1 April 1998].
GB	Great Britain.
GIS	geotechnical information system.
GLC	Greater London Council.
GLRO	Greater London Record Office.
GM	General Manager.
GO	government office [a regional office of the DoE and its successor departments].
HAT	housing action trust.
HCS	Head of Corporate Services.
HHDC	Hemel Hempstead Development Corporation.
HMC	The Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts. [Operating from 1 April 2003 with the PRO as The National Archives (TNA)].
HMSO	His/Her Majesty's Stationery Office.
HODS	Heads of Disciplines [at CNT, 1982-1992].
IDO	Inspection and Documentation Officer [at PRO].
INTA	International New Towns Association.
ISO	International Organisation for Standardisation.
LCC	London County Council.
LCCIEB	London Chamber of Commerce and Industry Commercial Education Trust Examinations Board.
LCD	Lord Chancellor's Department.
LCO	Lord Chancellor's Office.
LDA	London Development Agency.
LDDC	London Docklands Development Corporation.
LIS	Land Information System.
LMA	London Metropolitan Archives.
LRP	Land Reclamation Programme [of URA].
Ltd	Limited.
mb	megabyte.

MDC	Merseyside Development Corporation.
MHLG	Ministry of Housing and Local Government.
MKDC	Milton Keynes Development Corporation.
MKM	Milton Keynes Marketing Ltd.
MKX	Milton Keynes Executive Management Committee [at CNT Milton Keynes Office, 1992-1994. Renamed CRX in 1994].
ms	manuscript.
NAO	National Audit Office.
nd	no date.
NDC	Northampton Development Corporation.
NDPB	non departmental public body.
NLUD	National Land Use Database [of URA].
no	number.
np	no pagination.
NTA	New Towns Association.
NTC	New Towns Commission [i.e. Commission for the New Towns. Acronym generally used 1961-1980].
NTPF	New Towns Pension Fund.
ODPM	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.
OGC	Office of Government Commerce.
OIC	Office of the Information Commissioner.
p	page number.
PAK	Principal Assistant Keeper [at PRO].
pc	personal computer.
PDA	Peterborough Development Agency.
PFI	Private Finance Initiative.
PIDO	Principal Inspection and Documentation Officer [at PRO].
PIP	Partnership Investment Programme [of URA].
pp	page numbers.

PRO	Public Record Office [of England and the United Kingdom. Operating from 1 April 2003 with the HMC as The National Archives (TNA)].
PSA	Property Services Agency.
Quango	Quasi autonomous non-governmental organisation.
RDA	regional development agency.
RDC	Rural Development Commission.
RIPD	Records and Information Policy Document [of English Partnerships, 2002 to date].
RLO	“Records Liaison Officer” [at CNT/EP from 1994].
RMM	Records Management Meeting [at CNT/EP from 1992].
RMS	Records Management Society of Great Britain.
RMU	Records Management Unit [as at TWAS, or CNT].
RO	record office [for example, as in Berkshire RO].
RPD	Records Policy Document [of CNT, 1987-2002].
SCONUL	Standing Conference of National and University Libraries [Society of College, National and University Libraries from 2001].
SI	Statutory Instrument.
SLAIS	School of Library, Archive and Information Studies [at UCL].
SoA	Society of Archivists.
SRB	Single Regeneration Budget.
SWK	Scott Wilson Kirkpatrick [engineers].
TCPA	Town and Country Planning Association.
TDA	Telford Development Agency.
TDC	Telford Development Corporation [1968-1991]. Teesside Development Corporation [1987-1998].
TEC	technology and enterprise council.
TNA	The National Archives.
TSO	The Stationery Office.
TWAS	Tyne and Wear Archives Service.
TWDC	Tyne and Wear Development Corporation.

UCL	University College London.
UDA	urban development area.
UDC	urban development corporation.
UK	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.
URA	Urban Regeneration Agency [known as English Partnerships].
URC	urban regeneration company.
USA	United States of America.
vol	volume.
WFHAT	Waltham Forest Housing Action Trust.
WHS	Wheldon Houlsby and Scott [solicitors].
WRDC	Warrington and Runcorn Development Corporation.

MAP: BRITISH NEW TOWNS



Source: EP Records Centre, 1992. (Probably derived from map in: Town and Country Planning Association, *Town and Country Planning Special Issue: Making New Communities*, February 1978, London, Town and Country Planning Association, 1978).

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION and RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

“It is precisely at the time of dissolution or reorganisation that records are most ‘at risk’ and unless a well-defined procedure exists for their disposal the consequences are invariably disastrous...”

(Public Record Office official, 1969, the records of the new towns).¹

1.1 THE BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The British garden city and new town movement – the development of which is outlined in Chapter 2 – reached its pinnacle in the New Towns Act of 1946.² The resulting central government programme of new towns development had a major impact upon town planning, urban design and social development in the second half of the twentieth century. Implementation was via non-departmental public bodies,³ consisting of development corporations in each new town, and a national residuary body for the corporations from 1961, called the Commission for the New Towns (CNT).⁴ CNT operated from May 1999 with the Urban Regeneration Agency (URA) under the name of English Partnerships (EP). Much has been published about the planning, design and social aspects of new towns, but nothing about the management of the great many records produced by this historically significant programme.⁵

This thesis germinated in 1994 through issues created by CNT’s inheritance and management of records from other bodies, and by organisational change, which were directly encountered by the author as a practising records manager in the new towns. Comparison of his observations and experiences with records management theory and practice, and discussion with professional colleagues at University College London (UCL), suggested that detailed research might yield valuable analysis for the development of professional thinking. The new town agencies provide different source material to that more usually used in records management literature, being characterised by finite life-spans, and a rapid rate of organisational change. A study of this type is considered rare in the archives and records management profession at doctoral level. The author’s vantage-point within CNT from 1992, giving access to plentiful primary source material, was considered advantageous. Permission to undertake the study was obtained from CNT’s

¹ Letter, 14 July 1969, from Neville Williams, PRO Records Administration Officer to John Palmer, Assistant Secretary at Ministry of Housing and Local Government (MHLG), CNT Glen House file: N22/2 (formerly 83/1), “Preservation of Records”, 1965-1988, EP Records Centre.

² UK *New Towns Act, 1946, 9 & 10 Geo 6, Ch 68*, London, HMSO, 1946.

³ Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs) are Executive Bodies performing specific functions for their sponsor Departments of State. Klaus Boehm and Bill Garlick, *Quangos and Quangocrats The Shelgate Directory of Public Bodies, Executive Agencies, Nationalised Industries, Public Corporations & Regulators*, London, Shelgate, 1998.

⁴ Until the mid-1980s it was generally referred to as “the Commission”, “New Towns Commission”, or “NTC”. “CNT” was rare until 1980s promotional literature made it the standard acronym and abbreviation. The term “CNT” is used in this thesis.

Chief Executive, and the thesis was completed on a part-time basis over several years, as the author remained in work.⁶

1.2 THE AIM AND PURPOSE OF THE THESIS

The thesis research and data collection aimed to use CNT, its predecessor corporations, and associated bodies where appropriate, as a case study – not just to describe what happened in the new towns situation, but to identify, illustrate and explore issues, situations and concepts relating to records management in finite, changing and disappearing organisations. This topic offered a broad yet coherent research area, of professional relevance, with potential to contribute to knowledge, and to provide the evidential basis for improved approaches to the management of records in organisations experiencing change. A number of complementary data collection methodologies were applied to the main case study approach, as explained in Section 1.3 below.

Initial thoughts on the direction and purpose of the thesis were confirmed as research progressed, and analysis of historic data was reinforced by events in the workplace contemporaneous with development of the thesis. A specific hypothesis was not constructed at the outset for verification, but rather, key research questions were formulated from the literature review and data collection:

- 1) How did the finite and changing organisations in the case study approach records management? With what results?
- 2) What were the factors – internal and external – which influenced or directed the approach taken and the results achieved? Were there limitations? Were mistakes made? What worked or did not work?
- 3) What are the effects of organisational change on records management as demonstrated by the case study?
- 4) What lessons can be drawn for records management in such situations? What factors contribute to success, and what needs to be put in place?

These questions focused the main themes and findings from the data collection, with the overall aim of reaching conclusions and recommendations of benefit to professional knowledge and practice.

⁵ A selection of published works on new towns, consulted by the author, appears in the Bibliography.

1.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Types of Research

The research was contextual/descriptive (what occurred); diagnostic (why did it happen?); evaluative (how well did it happen or exist?); and strategic (what should be done?). The methodology was qualitative rather than quantitative, as this suited the exploratory, naturalistic and intuitive nature of the thesis. Within that qualitative approach, triangulation – the technique of using mixed research methods or multiple sources of evidence – was adopted.

The author primarily employed an organisational case study (embracing multiple studies of some forty organisations with a new town link), involving historical research, and augmented with interviews.⁷ He made extensive use of a substantial amount of primary records and archival documentation relating to new town organisations, together with personal knowledge and observation of operations, and he also conducted a secondary literature review.

Triangulation was utilised by converging this plurality of data sources on the same set of issues, queries, and facts, to provide multiple measures of the same matter, and thereby contribute to the reliability (consistency) and validity (correct measure of what is intended to be measured) of findings. For example, the relationship between a record office and a new town organisation was approached by examination of primary documents on the same subject held separately by CNT and by a record office, and by interviewing both record office and new town staff.

This mixed, but complementary, combination of research techniques was chosen for immersion – to secure comprehensive data coverage for the subject matter, to corroborate or augment any one piece of evidence (whilst not assuming that data collected from diverse sources was comparable), to avoid gaps, ambiguity, inaccuracy, misinterpretation and bias in analysis of findings, and to facilitate potential generalizability of conclusions and recommendations. This approach was in accord with qualitative research methodology literature read by the author.⁸

Research Plan

The initial research plan was to identify, locate, access and analyse existing primary records generated by, and relating to, records management activity in the new towns movement; to utilise the author's own workplace and professional experiences, knowledge and contacts; to identify

⁶ The issue of potential bias of a knowledgeable source is discussed in Section 1.3.

⁷ The value of the case study technique to both academic disciplines, such as historical research, and practice-orientated fields, is advocated in: Robert K Yin, *Case Study Research Design and Methods*, 2nd edition, Thousand Oaks, CA/London, Sage Publications, 1994, (Applied Social Research Methods Series, vol 5).

⁸ See Bibliography for full list of works consulted, but in particular: Michael Afolobi, "The Review of Related Literature In Research", *International Journal of Information & Library Research*, vol 4, no 1, 1992, pp59-66; G E Gorman and Peter Clayton, *Qualitative Research For The Information Professional, A Practical Handbook*, London, Library Association Publishing, 1997.

and interview key individuals in order to explore areas outside of the author's direct experience; to read published literature for background information and professional context; to maintain flexibility to undertake additional research avenues where appropriate. The author maintained this approach throughout the research period, with actions and progress regularly discussed with his supervisors through written reports and tutorials. Visits were made to conduct interviews and inspect records at twelve county record offices holding new town records.⁹ During the study period, the author was personally familiar with seven CNT offices, five combined CNT/URA offices, and visited the premises of eight urban development corporations (UDCs) and six housing action trusts (HATs), through which information and context were assimilated. Gorman and Clayton referred to the way in which people instinctively conduct qualitative research informally all the time.¹⁰

Flexibility of timing for individual research actions was maintained due to the constraints of part-time study, the volume of data to be collected, and the analysis process. So, for example, interviews were held throughout the period of study rather than in a set time-block, as opportunity presented, or questions arose from data analysis.

Data collection

To ensure reliability and validity of data, so that presentation of facts and events was accurate and analysis and conclusions credible, as well as to prevent superficial interpretation and reduce uncertainty, the author examined primary material extensively for references to records and record-keeping in new towns. This was done on an on-going basis as material was identified or became accessible. Even apparently mundane and routine data helped develop the author's understanding of the subject, making his use and analysis of sources meaningful, and enabling cross-checking. Data saturation reassured the author that he had more than sufficient raw data.¹¹ Primary sources were located and consulted as follows:

Primary Sources: Documentary

The records of development corporations and CNT provided the main documentary source, and of these, records management files within the Records Management section(s) were of primary interest, although departmental files containing records matters were also consulted when available. Most of these files were stored at CNT premises at the time of access, and will not necessarily be selected for permanent preservation for future research.

Files held by CNT did not always cover early relationships between predecessor corporations and county record offices. Few corporation files on these subjects had been deposited in record offices. Therefore, the author supplemented information from CNT records with data from

⁹ Thirteen local authority record offices cover twenty two new towns inherited by CNT. The author worked at Buckinghamshire Record Office, 1988-1992, and did not undertake a formal interview there.

¹⁰ Gorman and Clayton, 1997, p22.

¹¹ Section 1.5 Limitations and Exclusions includes discussion of source material.

record offices' own files – a source not normally available to the public. Access was requested at the same time as archivists were approached for interviews.¹²

CNT files did cover dialogue with its sponsor ministry and the Public Record Office (PRO), so it was considered reasonable not to consult the files of those central government bodies. The duplication of correspondence between CNT and record offices, found on record office own files, together with the considerable duplication between records files maintained by different staff or departments within CNT, suggested that little new would be found at the PRO.¹³ In 1981 the Association of County Archivists (ACA) had listed the main series of records held in the PRO relating to new towns, as being those of the Ministry of Housing and Local Government and its predecessors, for the period 1935-72, consisting of high-level policy, strategic and reporting records.¹⁴

The primary source files do not have foliation, so citations from files do not include page numbers. Nor is it practical, given the volume of relevant correspondence on files, to detail individual letters, memoranda and file notes in every footnote. Instead, the reader is directed to the relevant file. For ease of reference, footnotes to closed files held within the EP Records Centre, or within the live Records Management filing system (such as Theme 30 files) give full details for the first citation. For example, 'CNT Records file: 30/1/2/1, "Records – General and Policy – Computers – General", 1992-1998, EP Records Centre'. Subsequently, file origin and reference alone appear (for example, 'CNT Records: 30/1/2/1'), or equivalent finding aid if no file reference. A first full reference to an organisation (for example, 'Bracknell Development Corporation file: 305-4') is subsequently shortened (for example, 'Bracknell DC: 305-4'). From the shorter reference, full details may be located in the primary sources list in the Bibliography.

Primary Sources: Interviews

To add value to the data-collection process, an interview schedule was designed for two target populations – present and former new towns staff who were involved in records matters, and local authority archivists involved with new town records. Interviewees are listed in Appendix III. Due to the author's regular contact with PRO staff, and the extent of CNT documentation on public record matters, formal interviews of PRO staff were not undertaken. However, interviewing local archivists was deemed worthwhile, as contact was more intermittent. The author had established a gap in CNT documentation on relationships between record offices and corporations prior to the latter's transfer to CNT, and he wished to examine the archivists' own

¹² See Appendix I for sample letter to an archivist. Buckinghamshire Record Office own files were accessed without need for interview – see interview section below.

¹³ For example, the file about records management held by CNT's Director of Finance and Administration in 1998 does not contain anything that is not on Records Management files. CNT Post-1998 departmental file: 99/1/3/1/4, "Finance – Director – Regional Matters – Records Management", 1998, consignment 3917/2/3, EP Records Centre.

files. The interview purpose was to obtain memories, views, and insights, either to verify, supplement or explain documentary information, or in place of written sources where they were unavailable. Additionally, an archivist involved with receiving and organising records from the closure of a metropolitan local authority was interviewed for the purpose of comparison with the new town experience.¹⁵

The means of interview were considered in relation to available literature on techniques.¹⁶ Individual interviews were considered more likely to allow the time and environment to ensure input from each interviewee, and to provide in-depth understanding of opinions and experiences, than focus groups for example. Personal interviewing was favoured above postal questionnaires, as more likely to provide detailed explanation and exploration of issues and opinions. Interviewing time was justified and feasible because visits were combined with examination of documentation – whether new town deposits or record office own files.

Flexibility in timing of interviews, to fit around the author's other commitments and to allow for progress and flow of research, helped to keep research fresh through the study period. There were no refusals to participate, or unwillingness to answer particular questions. Co-operation was maximised as the author had letters of introduction/support from his tutors, and the author's position, both as the Departmental Record Officer of a depositing body, and a fellow practitioner undertaking research of potential use to the profession, appeared to encourage participation.¹⁷

Plentiful information and observations from new towns staff about records issues, events and personalities were either evident from CNT files, particularly the records management series, or were assimilated informally by the author in the workplace. This suggested that formal interviews of past and present senior management would not add significant data. The present and former new towns staff interviewed were therefore selected on the basis of their involvement with records work at locations or periods of which the author had no direct knowledge, and their ability to explain or expand upon material uncovered in documentary evidence, as this gave micro-level information that assisted understanding and interpretation of detailed events, individuals and records. With staff still in post, interviewing was largely unstructured and

¹⁴ Redditch Development Corporation file: "K.A. Small, Records Archives Redditch Development Corporation, File 1", 1981-1985, Acc 10300/792 (ii), Worcestershire Record Office.

¹⁵ Interview: 7 February 1995, Deborah Jenkins, Greater London Record Office (now London Metropolitan Archives) – Author's Notes.

¹⁶ Gorman and Clayton, 1997, pp44-46, 52, 124-157; Grant McCracken, *The Long Interview*, Newbury Park, CA/London, Sage Publications, 1988, (Qualitative Research Methods Series vol 13); David L Morgan, *Focus Groups As Qualitative Research*, 2nd edition, Thousand Oaks, CA/London, Sage Publications, 1997, (Qualitative Research Methods Series volume 16); A N Oppenheim, *Questionnaire Design, Interviewing and Attitude Measurement*, new edition, London/New York, Pinter Publishers, 1992; Margaret Slater, ed, *Research Methods In Library and Information Studies*, London, Library Association Publishing, 1990, pp23-27, 40-41, 54-76, 112-118, 136-139; Yin, pp84-86.

¹⁷ See Appendix II for Letter of Introduction.

informal face-to-face or telephone questioning and discussion, due to the position of access and familiarity held by the author. In some cases contact was one-off and brief, sufficient to confirm a fact or obtain an opinion. In other cases contact was on-going through the research period, as new information was discussed or previous information was checked.

A more structured and formal approach was taken to interviewing local authority archivists. The target population was established as the county archivist and/or his/her relevant nominee for each of the record offices that had received deposits of new town records.¹⁸ Buckinghamshire Record Office was excluded from formal interview for three reasons. The author had direct knowledge from working as a Buckinghamshire archivist for Milton Keynes Development Corporation (MKDC) in 1988-92, sufficient documentation occurred in CNT-held records due to MKDC's records centre passing uninterrupted to CNT, and thirdly, there had been no deposits prior to the author's involvement.¹⁹ It was decided to include all other repositories in the interview process/data collection, rather than a selection, in order to achieve saturation and enable valid patterns, similarities or disparities to emerge. Formal one-to-one interviews were held on twelve sites, combined with access to the record office own files and examination of deposited collections. Additionally, telephone interviews – following the same question format as the personal interviews – were practical, and were used for example with two former county archivists. The size and geographical range of the sample, the combination with other research techniques, and the verification of responses against documentary evidence, all served to increase validity and reduce possibility of bias.

The interview questions were incorporated within a letter from the author explaining his purpose and requesting access to the record office own files.²⁰ In many instances the author capitalised on his contacts to broach the research subject with the archivists informally, so a subsequent formal approach was not unexpected. Interviews were semi-structured and questions were open and exploratory to allow freedom and spontaneity of response, and development of topic discussion. The questions in the letter served as the interview prompt and check-list against which the author was able satisfactorily to compile manuscript field notes, without resort to tape-recordings or verbatim transcripts.²¹ Respondents invariably had their office files present, which were made available to the author. Any bias from selective note-taking was reduced or countered by the size of the interview sample, and by cross-checking to documentary evidence.

Secondary Sources

Secondary sources of published material such as annual reports, corporate plans, newspaper articles and promotional material were available within CNT, and published works on new towns were also examined. These sources were mainly used to set the historic and organisational new

¹⁸ See Appendix IV for record offices and new towns they cover.

¹⁹ However, the author examined Buckinghamshire Record Office's own files.

²⁰ See Appendix I for a sample letter.

²¹ A sample transcript of interview notes is in Appendix V.

town framework in Chapters 2-3. Archival and records management works providing professional context and ideas, and other works to inform the thesis such as on management, organisational change, and qualitative research, were consulted in university and other libraries, and are detailed in the Bibliography. Secondary sources are also discussed in the Literature Review below.

Data Recording and Analysis

To store and retrieve collected data for analysis, the author made manuscript and word-processed notes, or made copies of key material. He created finding aids to, and made interpretative and analytical notes about, collected data, and also kept aide memoires of his own observations, hypotheses and methodological ideas as they occurred.

Data analysis overlapped with data collection, to guide further data gathering, to avoid being overwhelmed by volume, and to maintain the research “chain of evidence” linking the research questions to data collected to conclusions drawn.²² Data was systematically sorted and selected into key themes based on the research questions, and evolving thesis chapters. Data was compared and contrasted on an on-going basis against the research objectives, to understand it, answer questions, locate any patterns, relationships or contradictory evidence, make judgements, or raise new lines of enquiry. Triangulation of data suggested that data selected was reliable and valid, and provided a credible basis for interpretation and conclusions.

The Role of the Author as a Knowledgeable Source and Avoidance of Potential Bias

The author’s employment as a local authority archivist seconded to MKDC (1988-92), and as a records manager and departmental record officer (DRO) for CNT/EP from 1992 aided considerably the research, interpretation and assessment of records and events. His position allowed informal observation of contemporary events, and of the operations and views of many staff in different disciplines, at varying levels of seniority, in new town and related bodies and archival repositories. He was uniquely placed to access the great mass of extant material, and had privileged access to sources not normally available to researchers at the time. Where the author’s knowledge of events has been used, unsubstantiated by other sources, this is indicated in footnotes as ‘Author’s Knowledge’.

The author was immersed in his work-related subject-matter over a prolonged period. The potential benefits for accuracy and quality of findings from first-hand involvement were clear, as was also the need to recognise and avoid the potential risks of preconceptions, bias and conflict. It was possible, through professional objectivity and a combination of rigorous research techniques, to build a balanced view of, and bring an analytical perspective to, an environment and subject-matter with which the author was very familiar. This is accepted in methodology

²² Yin, pp79,98-99; G E Gorman and Peter Clayton, *Qualitative Research For The Information Professional, A Practical Handbook*, 2nd edition, London, Facet Publishing, 2005, p25.

literature.²³ The author consulted colleagues and supervisors to review and test his methods, interpretation and analysis, and to seek to avoid bias. Concerns over confidentiality, and naming and critical evaluation of organisations and living individuals were discussed with tutors.

1.4 LITERATURE REVIEW

The author reviewed literature to establish the uniqueness of new towns records management as a research subject, to inform his historical investigation into the selected organisations, and for the wider and general archival/records management and organisational context of the issues for which the new towns provide an example. The author read widely amongst professional journals, periodicals and text-books as set out in the Bibliography. Particular attention was directed to issues of management, and technological and organisational change to inform his appraisal of this aspect of the case study. Selective background reading continued through to completion of the thesis to allow for inclusion of relevant material published within its duration. Professional context was also achieved through information obtained at conferences and seminars organised by the PRO and the Records Management Society, and other workplace-related activity.

New Towns Literature

The extent of available published professional literature on records management in new towns is minimal. The MKDC archivists wrote a couple of short articles for the Society of Archivists in 1985 and 1992. After this thesis research began, a brief reference to the 1960s discussion on the status of CNT records appeared in a history of the PRO, and an article on disposing of records during the closure of an urban development corporation was written for the *Records Management Journal* by a member of the author's staff.²⁴

There are many books on new town planning and the new towns movement in general, written mostly by planners and architects. For example, authoritative works include those by the Welwyn Garden City pioneer Frederic Osborn in collaboration with the artist and architect Arnold Whittick, and by the new towns civil servant, Frank Schaffer.²⁵ However, although the New Towns Association in 1982 discussed the lack of a "sophisticated quantitative and qualitative assessment of the new towns contribution to the national good", and of a professional new towns practitioners handbook, it did not pursue a "general definitive history of the new

²³ Yin, p59; Gorman and Clayton, 1997, pp70,86,185-186.

²⁴ Mike Evans, "Training Day on records management, 1985 - Setting up a records management system", *The Society of Archivists Thames Region Newsletter*, October 1986, np; Gordon Reid, "Archives and Milton Keynes", *The Society of Archivists The Newsletter*, No 60, March 1992, pp13-14; John D Cantwell, *The Public Record Office 1959-1969*, Richmond, Public Record Office, 2000, p107; Sophie Philipson, "Closure of a Government Agency – Disposing of the Records", *Records Management Journal*, vol 8, no 1, April 1998, pp67-73.

²⁵ Frederic J Osborn, and Arnold Whittick, *New Towns – Their Origins, Achievements and Progress*, 3rd edition, London, Leonard Hill, 1977; Frank Schaffer, *The New Town Story*, 2nd edition, London, Paladin, 1972.

towns”.²⁶ Town guides written during new town development, and local histories written during or after development, generally make reference to the role of the development corporations and/or CNT.²⁷ Official guides were even issued jointly by some corporations and councils.²⁸

Amateur new town histories rather than academic, authoritative sources are prevalent. Many corporations approaching closure invested in a comprehensive record of their achievements. These were written by past or present senior officers, such as Stephen Holley, the former General Manager at Washington, and Garry Philipson, the former Managing Director at Aycliffe and Peterlee.²⁹ Such works can provide conflicting accounts of the same events. For example, Holley and Philipson give differing versions of each other’s corporations’ views and roles in the extension of their corporations’ closure dates.³⁰ On rare occasions, a professional historian was commissioned to undertake the work, such as Philip Riden for Cwmbran.³¹ Northampton engaged a social and industrial historian whose works included histories of the Baltic Exchange and the Automobile Association.³² In 1991 MKDC employed a former journalist who had already compiled a history for Peterborough.³³ Telford opted for the journalist son of the celebrated Welwyn planner Louis de Soissons.³⁴ Not all corporations commissioned histories. On the eve of Basildon Development Corporation’s closure, it simply produced a pictorial booklet on its famous plotlands, in collaboration with the Countryside Commission.³⁵ Three years before Central Lancashire’s closure, its General Manager was strongly opposed to producing a corporation history:

²⁶ CNT Glen House file: 7/2, “General Managers’ Committee 1982/83/84”, 1982-1984, consignment CNT 470, EP Records Centre.

²⁷ For example: Warrington Borough Council, *Warrington Official Borough Handbook*, Wallington, Home Publishing Company, nd [1980/81], pp71-75.

²⁸ For example: Easthampstead Rural District Council and Bracknell Development Corporation, *The Official Guide to Bracknell and the Rural District of Easthampstead*, Gloucester, The British Publishing Company, nd [1970-71].

²⁹ Stephen Holley, *Washington: Quicker by Quango – The History of Washington New Town 1964-1983*, Stevenage, Publications for Companies, 1983; Garry Philipson, *Aycliffe and Peterlee New Towns 1946-1988 – Swords into Ploughshares and Farewell Squalor*, Cambridge, Publications for Companies, 1988.

³⁰ Holley, p169; Philipson, p230.

³¹ Philip Riden, *Rebuilding a Valley – A History of Cwmbran Development Corporation*, Cwmbran, Cwmbran Development Corporation, 1988. Riden was a lecturer at University College, Cardiff at the time.

³² Hugh Barty-King, *Expanding Northampton*, London, Secker and Warburg, 1985.

³³ Terence Bendixson, *The Peterborough Effect – Reshaping A City*, Peterborough, Peterborough Development Corporation, 1988; Terence Bendixson and John Platt, *Milton Keynes: Image and Reality*, Cambridge, Granta Editions, 1992.

³⁴ Maurice de Soissons, *Telford The Making of Shropshire’s New Town*, Shrewsbury, Swan Hill Press, 1991.

³⁵ Basildon Development Corporation, *A Plotland Album The Story of the Dunton Hills Community*, 2nd edition, Basildon, Basildon Development Corporation, 1984.

“I am much more interested in laying down a good archive of the CLNT experience than perpetrating some self congratulatory and superficial memoirs as some of the other Corporations have done and pretend that that is history!”³⁶

Thus, in 1987 when Publications for Companies suggested a book to the successor CNT Office, the Executive Officer declined on the grounds that the archives were available for study in the Lancashire Record Office.³⁷ Similarly, Corby Development Corporation’s former Administrative Officer, Peter Lane, hoped in 1991 that in the absence of an official history, Corby’s deposited archives “when available for public examination, will demonstrate the qualities of vision, leadership and above average ability of those who were members, managers, chief officers and staff.”³⁸

None of these works – new town assessments or corporation histories – had the purpose of examining the records management of the new town bodies. Many used pictorial records from the archives of corporations and CNT to illustrate their works. For example, a history of Welwyn Garden City which was commissioned by the local council two decades after the corporation closed and five years after CNT closed its local office, acknowledged “the loan of certain pictures for reproduction in this book from the Hertfordshire County Archives ...and the Commission for the New Towns”.³⁹ However, few works refer to records per se or to a records management function. Those that do, do so indirectly to make another point rather than as a specific examination of the records or of record-keeping. For example, Holley stressed the promotional importance of a “good pictorial record of progress” via aerial mosaics, black and white photographs and colour slides for use in exhibitions and lectures, and of information films about the town.⁴⁰ Len White, former Social Development Officer at Harlow, noted that the corporation “commissioned a photographic survey of the designated area and has kept a photographic record of the evolution of the town ever since”.⁴¹ Hugh Barty-King acknowledged the help of Northampton Development Corporation’s Librarian, and commented that his research “was made that amount easier by being able to use the Press Cuttings books kept so immaculately by the Corporation’s Press Office”.⁴² Board member Gordon Anstis at Redditch acknowledged the help of the Corporation’s Librarian/Archivist and his assistant, which included collating all the

³⁶ Lancashire Record Office office file, L.08/NTC, “New Town Records Central Lancs: NTC Development Corp”, 1983-, Lancashire Record Office.

³⁷ Central Lancashire Development Corporation/CNT file: 1/50, “Archives”, 1985-1992, consignment 1865/13/1, EP Records Centre.

³⁸ Catalogue: “Corby Development Corporation and Commission for the New Towns, Records and Archives, Volume 4. Drawings – Plans, Prints and Negatives, Tubes Nos. 110-132”, Introduction, np, 1991, Northamptonshire Record Office.

³⁹ Maurice de Soissons, *Welwyn Garden City: A Town Designed for Healthy Living*, Cambridge, Publications for Companies, 1988, pxiii.

⁴⁰ Holley, p132.

⁴¹ Frederick Gibberd, Ben Hyde Harvey, Len White and other contributors, *Harlow: The Story of a New Town*, Stevenage, Publications for Companies, 1980, p248.

⁴² Barty-King, pxx.

photographs.⁴³ Some works made passing reference to records as historic source material, as when Grigor McClelland, writing as Washington wound-up, referred scholars to the Tyne and Wear Museums Service where “substantial archive material (including specialist Corporation publications) has been deposited”.⁴⁴ The authors of the Harlow book noted in the bibliography that “Harlow Development Corporation has deposited its principal records with the Essex Record Office, County Hall, Chelmsford, so that students of the new towns can have access in perpetuity to these archives. A duplicate set of non-confidential papers and publications have been placed in the Local Studies Collection at Harlow Central Library”.⁴⁵ Former Stevenage General Manager, Jack Balchin, wrote that he had not attempted “an objective history” which could “be left to the professional historians for whom the Corporation has been careful to preserve its records.”⁴⁶

Similar points are true to date for urban development corporations (UDCs) and housing action trusts (HATs). The author is unaware of published histories commissioned by UDCs. Trafford Park Development Corporation merits a chapter in a general history of the area, and provided financial assistance and illustrations for the work.⁴⁷ The historian James Bentley charted the regeneration of Docklands by the London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC) between 1981 and 1998, and drew heavily on LDDC photographs and publications, although no other link to LDDC is acknowledged in the publication.⁴⁸ North Hull Housing Action Trust used a company specialising in giving “people a chance to have their say about community development through the use of personal reminiscence and anecdote” to publish what the cover described as “The story of the first Housing Action Trust”, but which the foreword declared was “not a history of the North Hull HAT” as it was “too early to write that”. It was, in fact, a series of contributions by residents and others associated with the HAT, illustrated with photographs. There was no drawing upon, or reference to, HAT archives at all.⁴⁹ The Waltham Forest, Tower Hamlets and Stonebridge HATs did not publish histories, although Waltham Forest produced an annual report-style ‘history’.⁵⁰ Castle Vale marked its closure by commissioning a journalist, who specialised in housing, architecture and economic development issues, to write an illustrated account of the revival of the estate. The publication acknowledged that “The Trust’s records and archives were also placed at his disposal”. However, the publication did not list English

⁴³ Gordon Anstis, *Redditch: Success in the Heart of England The History of Redditch New Town 1964-1985*, Stevenage, Publications for Companies, 1985, ppxv-xvi.

⁴⁴ Grigor McClelland, *Washington: Over and Out –The Story of Washington New Town 1983-1988*, Cambridge, Publications for Companies, 1988, p1.

⁴⁵ Gibberd, Harvey, White, p395.

⁴⁶ Jack Balchin, *First New Town, An Autobiography of the Stevenage Development Corporation 1946-1980*, Stevenage, Stevenage Development Corporation, 1980, pxii.

⁴⁷ Robert Nicholls, *Trafford Park The First Hundred Years*, Chichester, Phillimore & Co, 1996.

⁴⁸ James Bentley, *East of the City The London Docklands Story*, London, Pavilion Books, 1997.

⁴⁹ Brian Lewis, *New for Old: The Story of the First Housing Action Trust*, Hull, North Hull Housing Action Trust, 1998.

⁵⁰ Waltham Forest Housing Action Trust, *History of Waltham Forest Housing Action Trust 1991-2002*, London, Waltham Forest Housing Action Trust, 2002.

Partnerships amongst the “successor organisations” (although it was the HAT’s main residual body and inheritor of its records), focusing on local organisations of relevance to tenants.⁵¹

Annual reports and promotional literature produced by new town and other bodies helped the author to understand their organisational structure and development, and geographical and other features of the areas they developed. However, as with the official histories, there is little of direct relevance to records management in these sources. Study of local authority record office annual reports for the 1960s to 1990s for those offices receiving new town collections revealed only brief factual mentions of accessions from development corporations or CNT. They did highlight issues and concerns facing repositories, such as lack of storage space and staff, backlogs of cataloguing, computerisation, and, in some cases, tentative involvement with records management within their own councils.⁵²

Organisational Change

Literature about management and organisations is voluminous, with a predominantly commercial business focus. However, many principles and issues, such as strategy and strategic management, also pertain to the public sector.⁵³ The author read about aspects of organisational management and change relevant to the research questions and significant themes of the thesis, in order to relate new towns records management in a changing environment to a wider organisational context, and to ascertain any specific thinking on records management and organisational change. General texts did not refer much, if at all, to records management, beyond general references to record-keeping, although it received greater attention in some works on office administration.⁵⁴ Works advocating the strategic importance of information resources, did not necessarily specify records management. Nor was there extensive coverage of records management and organisational change in archive and records management publications.

Organisational Structure and Strategy

There is no one ideal form of organisation, and therefore an organisation “must be designed in accordance with its needs as these are determined by the demands of its situation.”⁵⁵ However, most organisations are not designed, but grow.⁵⁶ Organisational structures are likely to reflect power structures, to delineate important relationships, and to emphasise what the organisation considers important.⁵⁷ All writers seem to share Handy’s view that an effective organisation is one with an appropriate structure and culture, with that appropriateness determined by the various

⁵¹ Adam Mornement, *No Longer Notorious - The Revival of Castle Vale, 1993-2005*, Birmingham, Castle Vale Housing Action Trust, 2005.

⁵² See the Bibliography for examples of reports and promotional literature examined.

⁵³ Gerry Johnson and Kevan Scholes, *Exploring Corporate Strategy*, 6th edition, Harlow, Financial Times, Prentice-Hall, 2002, p28.

⁵⁴ C S Deverall, *Office Administration*, London, Gee & Co Publishers, 1980, pp56-70.

⁵⁵ Rosemary Stewart, *The Reality of Management*, London, William Heineman, 1963, p43.

⁵⁶ Charles B Handy, *Understanding Organisations*, 4th edition, Harmondsworth, Penguin Group, 1993, p253.

⁵⁷ Johnson and Scholes, p235.

forces of technology, the market place, size and staff. The difficulty lies in implementing that concept operationally.⁵⁸

Strategy – the long-term direction of an organisation – gained importance in the second half of the twentieth century, as firms grew larger and technology advanced. They needed to match or ‘fit’ their resources and skills with the changing environment within which they operated, and make strategic decisions to achieve some advantage. Strategy is affected by the values and expectations of those with power in the organisation. Strategic decisions are likely to affect operational decisions, involve change, and demand an integrated approach to managing the organisation. Strategic management involves understanding the strategic position of an organisation (the impact on strategy of external environment, internal resources and competencies), strategic choices for the future, and turning strategy into action. Strategic priorities need to be understood in terms of the particular context of an organisation. Strategic choices will be influenced by experience, culture, and political processes. Strategy therefore is more likely to emerge over time rather than being selected at a point in time, and the influence of experience and culture can cause strategic drift.⁵⁹ From the 1960s theorists generally accepted that organisational strategy, processes and structure are linked, and that organisational structure follows the growth strategy of a company. For example, firms pursuing state-of-the-art technology should have strong technical functions with specialist expertise.⁶⁰

Johnson and Scholes touched on United Kingdom (UK) government agencies, pointing out that, like private companies, they have labour and money markets, suppliers and users/customers, but explicitly, they centre on a political market that approves budgets and provides subsidies. This dimension, and changing political dogmas, influence the decision-making and strategy of such bodies. From the 1980s there was a political need to compete for resource input, and to demonstrate best value for money output, with the introduction of private sector-style competition such as performance indicators and competitive tendering. From the mid-1990s an emphasis on outcomes of social importance was encouraged through co-operative, inter-agency working and strategic alliances.⁶¹

Change and Change Management

Change is inevitable and organisational change is not a modern phenomenon. Stewart discussed the pressures of change in companies in 1963.⁶² In 1981 Luthans stated that “Everyone today is keenly aware of and concerned about change” and quoted from a 1969 work that change “may

⁵⁸ Handy, p254.

⁵⁹ Charles W Hofer and Dan Schendel, *Strategy Formulation: Analytical Concepts*, St Paul, Minn, West Publishing Company, 1978, pp4,12-16; Johnson and Scholes, pp4-5,8-10,16,21,33,416-417.

⁶⁰ Jay R Galbraith and Daniel A Nathanson, *Strategy Implementation: The Role of Structure and Process*, St Paul, Minn, West Publishing Company, 1978, p10,72,142-143.

⁶¹ Johnson and Scholes, p29.

⁶² Stewart, pp13,28,163-183.

occur with such rapidity that we are left somewhat breathless in the wake of the waves.”⁶³ Handy drew attention to future change in the shape, size and nature of organisations as technology, values, priorities and nature of work change. Whilst not advocating change for change’s sake, he recommended that organisations do not assume that what works today will always do so, but that they survive by adapting to changing situations and requirements.⁶⁴ In the public sector, a change in Government may lead to changes in regulations and policies.⁶⁵ Dawson stated that change in one aspect inevitably means change in another, and that there may be unintended results or consequences from actions taken. She also pointed out that resources are always scarce in organisations, and any change will have financial and social costs as well as perceived benefits.⁶⁶

In terms of handling change, Handy felt that to ‘cultivate change’ is a more realistic and desirable term and objective than the more controlling one of ‘manage change’.⁶⁷ He listed forms of change, such as mergers and technological alterations, as managerial problems, and felt that it would always be the manager’s task “to understand what is going on, to judge the interplay of forces and to choose the best available compromise in a changing and imperfect world”.⁶⁸ Johnson and Scholes also discussed the role and style of individual managers as key agents or influencers of change.⁶⁹

Organisational Culture and Ethos

Cultures are a variable in organisational development.⁷⁰ An organisational culture is the set of basic assumptions, beliefs, values and norms shared by members of an organisation, and which largely operate unconsciously.⁷¹ Handy suggested that culture cannot be precisely defined, as it is something perceived or felt.⁷² Values may however be written into organisational mission statements, and also occur in annual reports and business plans.⁷³ Handy stated that, as organisations are different and varied, so are their cultures and this is reflected in diverse structures and systems. He pointed out that the dominant culture in an organisation changes as the organisation grows or changes, and a changing culture changes structure and decision-making processes, with effects on staff, such as turnover, as few people are equally at home in all cultures.⁷⁴ There may also be important sub-cultures within an organisation based on identifiers

⁶³ Fred Luthans, *Organisational Behaviour*, international student edition, 3rd edition, Tokyo/London, McGraw-Hill International, 1981, p609.

⁶⁴ Handy, pp220,330,345.

⁶⁵ Sandra Dawson, *Analysing Organisations*, 3rd edition, Basingstoke, Macmillan Press, 1996, pp80-81.

⁶⁶ Dawson, ppxxvi,233,243,269.

⁶⁷ Handy, p292.

⁶⁸ Handy, p220.

⁶⁹ Johnson and Scholes, pp545-553.

⁷⁰ Handy, p403.

⁷¹ Johnson and Scholes, p45.

⁷² Handy, p191.

⁷³ Johnson and Scholes, pp12,228-229,239.

⁷⁴ Handy, pp180,201.

such as profession, union membership, function, or geographic location.⁷⁵ Handy and Dawson both drew attention to the organic nature of organisations, for although organisations have overall objectives – over and above those of their staff – they still consist of communities of individuals and interest groups with different attitudes, values, objectives and priorities, who clash, compete for resources and power, and engage in alliances, cliques, rivalries and contests.⁷⁶

By the early 1980s, a systematic approach to change management, with planned development of human resources to meet new technologies, markets and other requirements, and to create an integrated and effective organisational culture by changing some aspects of the way the organisation worked, was known as ‘organisational development’.⁷⁷ Johnson and Scholes advocated “a culture of a learning organisation”, facilitated by structures and processes and a commitment to individual and team development, that is capable of continual regeneration from the variety of knowledge, skills and experience of individuals with a shared purpose or vision.⁷⁸ Dawson, however, pondered the difficulties in creating or manipulating a culture, and in securing its homogeneity and appropriateness. She also referred to how power structures and control processes mean that some parties are excluded from issues in which they have an interest, or even the knowledge that they are under discussion and liable to change.⁷⁹

Change and Information Management

Much knowledge is embedded tacitly in organisational culture and is not explicitly understood or recognised, but taken for granted and occurs naturally.⁸⁰ Information may be held – even hoarded – by individual ‘gatekeepers’, and be ignored, overlooked or under-utilised. Decision-makers can operate with ‘false knowledge’, thinking they have all the information parameters they need.⁸¹ Coventry recognised in the 1970s that with the increasing size and complexity of organisations, sophisticated ‘total management information’ systems, treating all data as inter-related, and utilising the capabilities of computers for data-gathering and output, were needed for informed decision-making.⁸² Literature from the 1980s increasingly advocated and emphasised the need for organisations to define, understand, and utilise information resources strategically for improved competitiveness and business benefit.⁸³ Information-sharing and decentralisation of control systems to enable front-line and speedy actions to support strategic requirements and

⁷⁵ Johnson and Scholes, p229.

⁷⁶ Handy, pp190,291; Dawson, pxxvii.

⁷⁷ Luthans, pp608-637; Handy, p248.

⁷⁸ Johnson and Scholes, pp72,522,583.

⁷⁹ Dawson, pp146-147,173-175.

⁸⁰ Johnson and Scholes, pp179,491.

⁸¹ Dawson, pp200,206.

⁸² William F Coventry, *Management Made Simple*, revised reprint, London, W H Allen & Co, 1977, pp99-101.

⁸³ Cornelius F Burk and Forest W Horton, *InfoMap: A Complete Guide To Discovering Corporate Information Resources*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, Prentice-Hall, 1988, pp155-179; Johnson and Scholes, pp490-493.

competitiveness were advocated.⁸⁴ Generation and communication of information are particularly important where uncertainties and complexities are concerned, but Dawson touched upon the complexity of defining what is 'right' when talking about moving the right information to the right place at the right time.⁸⁵

Forms of Change: Centralisation versus Decentralisation

Stewart felt that no business is completely centralised, and rather than a choice between centralisation or decentralisation, it is a question of individual circumstances as to how much decentralisation to have, and that the best balance will vary at different periods.⁸⁶ Some 1970s studies – but not all – suggested that decentralisation led to high performance in competitive environments.⁸⁷

Handy referred to the conflicting pressures in an organisation between the desire for central control, identity and uniformity, and for diversity. The latter leads to decentralisation, which was in vogue when Handy wrote, but he pointed out that individual satisfaction, advocated as achievable through high levels of decentralisation, did not necessarily equate to productivity. Nor did centralisation have to mean formalisation.⁸⁸

Forms of Change: Technological

Stewart forecast in 1963 that “information technology” – a new term that she had to explain to her readers – “may radically change the nature” of management.⁸⁹ In 1981, Luthans described change as probably most visible as a technological force, and that “there have been technological advances through the ages, but not at this rate of change”.⁹⁰ Twiss felt that rapidly changing business conditions, largely brought about by technology, necessitated anticipating and planning for change, rather than reacting when it occurred, as once was possible, and that this situation had created the rapid development of formal corporate planning from the 1960s.⁹¹

In 1993 Handy forecast that the electronic communications revolution would shape future organisations, as systems became ever cheaper and adaptable, and information became easier to move around than people.⁹² Johnson and Scholes wrote that cheaper and more powerful communication technology opportunities fuel devolution of decision-making and de-layering of management hierarchies, although increased spans of control can overstretch remaining

⁸⁴ Tom Peters, *Thriving on Chaos, Handbook for a Management Revolution*, London, Macmillan, 1988, pp504-508.

⁸⁵ Dawson, pp191,194.

⁸⁶ Stewart, pp25-26.

⁸⁷ Galbraith and Nathanson, p60.

⁸⁸ Handy, pp256,264,405.

⁸⁹ Stewart, pp169-170.

⁹⁰ Luthans, p610.

⁹¹ Brian Twiss, *Managing Technological Innovation*, 3rd edition, London, Pitman Publishing, 1986, p9.

⁹² Handy, pp315,355-356,370.

managers. They described replacement of physical and paper-based processes with electronic ones, such as “e-procurement” for tendering and purchasing, as “transformational in driving strategic changes in and between organisations”, and stressed the importance of aligning business and technology strategies.⁹³ However, as Dawson pointed out, technology in itself does not eradicate communication problems which lie in social organisation and human behaviour.⁹⁴

Forms of Change: Out-sourcing, Privatisation and Partnerships

By and from the 1990s, increasing amounts of work were out-sourced, adding to the diversity of organisational structures and processes. For example, out-sourcing relationships require different management competencies to those needed for controlling in-house staff. This external activity went beyond traditional business concepts of suppliers, retailers, advisors, consultants and agents, to out-sourcing in-house activities in pursuit of cost-savings and value for money, to providing new networks and alliances with other organisations through partnership arrangements, joint ventures, and consortia, where resources and activities were shared to pursue a common strategy. In the UK public sector context, the Conservative Government of 1979-97 sought improved public services through market forces, whilst its Labour successor from 1997 advocated ‘joined-up government’ between departments and agencies to increase accessibility and quality of services.⁹⁵

Forms of Change: Acquisitions and Mergers

The acquisition (taking over) of one organisation by another, usually stronger and larger, organisation, or the merger (welding together) of comparable organisations, was a significant topic for management and business texts contemporary with the case study period.⁹⁶ The 1990s saw many mergers in the UK in professional service organisations, and in pharmaceutical, electricity and information technology sectors. Benefits were sought from acquisitions and mergers, but problems also arose in integrating organisations where cultures clashed and a dominant organisation failed to understand practices in the other body. This raised issues of post-merger strategy – assimilate ‘joiners’ into the dominant culture, build a hybrid from both cultures, or retain existing cultures intact and separate – as appropriate to the motivation for the acquisition or merger.⁹⁷

Records Management and Change

The management and organisational texts examined above focused upon market considerations and business advantage, and did not seem, beyond consideration of harnessing IT and knowledge for learning cultures, to consider the effects of change upon organisational records and record-

⁹³ Johnson and Scholes, pp444,497,522,524.

⁹⁴ Dawson, p193.

⁹⁵ Handy, pp271-274,288; Johnson and Scholes, pp378,380,450,572; Cabinet Office, *Better Quality Services, A Handbook on creating Public/Private Partnerships through Market Testing and Contracting Out*, London, TSO, 1998.

⁹⁶ Coventry, pp260-273.

⁹⁷ Johnson and Scholes, pp375,377,411.

keeping, or to examine the contribution of records management to competitiveness and efficiency. Specialist records and information literature focused upon change issues from the late 1980s, but mostly around those posed by computers and electronic records, and the changes these wrought for traditional records management, and archival selection.

The growing recognition of information as a valuable organisational resource requiring management was demonstrated by librarians and information managers who wrote – often without referring to ‘records’ – about changes brought by the information society and the need for a strategic response.⁹⁸ However, some writers linked libraries, records management and information resource management, and advocated that records managers play a central role, to plan for, and cope with, the challenges and opportunities of change and its repercussions, so that organisational memory was retained and accessible.⁹⁹

In the traditional archives field, William Serjeant in his 1987 presidential address to the UK Society of Archivists alerted members to the challenges and threats from developments in information science and management, and warned that they required their “most urgent attention”.¹⁰⁰ Some business archivists discussed broadening their traditional positions to that of corporate knowledge managers for internal information.¹⁰¹ Others advocated the benefits of archivists understanding and working within the cultures of their companies in order to develop and maintain successful archive programmes.¹⁰² In terms of other forms of change, some articles were prompted by concerns about the effect on archives and repositories of local government reorganisation, involving closure or merger of some authorities, and privatisation of some council services.¹⁰³

Records management texts routinely advised upon the need to discover and understand the organisational context and business processes that produce records. By the 1980s writers also

⁹⁸ James V McGee, and Laurence Prusak, *Managing Information Strategically*, New York/Chichester, John Wiley & Sons Inc, 1993, (The Ernst & Young Information Management Series); Christopher Turner, “Information, chaos and change”, Andrew Ettinger, “From Information to total quality learning” and Liz MacLachlan, “The evolving role of the information professional in government”, in *The Value of Information To The Intelligent Organisation*, Hatfield, University of Hertfordshire Press, 1994, pp83-122.

⁹⁹ Candy Schwartz and Peter Hernon, *Records Management And The Library: Issues and Practices*, Norwood, NJ, Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1993, pp292-297.

¹⁰⁰ William Serjeant, “New lamps for old: some reflections on information”, *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, vol 8, no 4, October 1987, pp241-246.

¹⁰¹ Paul C Lasewicz, “Riding Out The Apocalypse: The Obsolescence Of Traditional Archivy In The Face Of Modern Corporate Dynamics”, *Proceedings of the Annual Conference of the Business Archive Council*, 1997, London, Business Archive Council, 1997, pp77-91.

¹⁰² Susan C Box, “A Study In Contrasts: Corporate Culture And Its Influence In Developing Archives Program In Two Multinationals”, *Proceedings of the Annual Conference of the Business Archive Council*, 1997, London, Business Archive Council, 1997, pp169-179.

¹⁰³ For example: E K Berry, “The Local Government Act 1985 and the archive services of the Greater London Council and the metropolitan county councils”, *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, vol 9, no 3, July 1988, pp119-147; Margaret H Whittick, “The family silver:

pointed to the importance of a records management unit having its own strategic goals which matched those of its organisation and against which performance and resource requirements could be measured.¹⁰⁴ The Records Management Society's bulletins provided a forum from 1983 to report problems occurring in organisations, such as the National Health Service, from poor records management.¹⁰⁵ Generally however, discussion of records management's strategic contribution to business and government, and reference to the issues and effects for records and records management of organisational change, received little attention before the 1990s.¹⁰⁶ In 1995, the Records Management Group of the Society of Archivists published a collection of case studies on organisational change.¹⁰⁷ However, case study articles on records management and change management (other than technological and systems development aspects) remained few thereafter.¹⁰⁸

Waagemann predicted as early as 1983 that technological change would replace the "paper records manager" with a "new computer records manager".¹⁰⁹ Many archivists and records managers recognised by the mid-1990s that changing telecommunications were flattening and decentralising structures, and empowering knowledge-based workforces, but were also concerned by organisations failing to establish or adapt mechanisms to capture and preserve evidence of decisions and actions for accountability and corporate memory.¹¹⁰ A great deal of archival and records management literature was generated on change issues stemming from electronic records, and the need for life-cycle management and early intervention in record creation, and for

privatisation and the archivist", *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, vol 11, nos 1 & 2, January & April 1990, pp1-9.

¹⁰⁴ Peter Emmerson, *How To Manage Your Records*, Cambridge, ICSA Publishing, 1989, p12.

¹⁰⁵ For example: Records Management Society, "Report of the General Meeting – 9 September, The Relationship Between Archives and Records Management", *Records Management Bulletin*, no 17, December 1986, pp1,6.

¹⁰⁶ For example: Carl Newton, "The future of records management is not what it used to be", *Records Management Journal*, 6, no 3, December 1996, pp151-159; Lesley A King, "Records management as a strategic business function", *Records Management Journal*, vol 7, no 1, April 1997, pp5-11; Bruce W Dearstyne, *Managing Government Records & Information*, Prairie Village, Kansas, ARMA International, 1999; Elizabeth Parker, *Managing Your Organisation's Records*, London, Library Association Publishing, 1999, pp120-133; Elizabeth Shepherd and Geoffrey Yeo, *Managing Records, A Handbook Of Principles and Practice*, London, Facet Publishing, 2003, pp47-48,70,74,266-268.

¹⁰⁷ Derek Charman, ed, *Records Management And Organisational Change*, Society of Archivists Records Management Group Occasional Paper Series, no 7, London, Society of Archivists, 1995.

¹⁰⁸ For example: Andrew Brown, "Preservation of Metropolitan Police Service records under the Greater London Authority", *Records Management Journal*, vol 11, no 1, April 2001, pp19-34; Ian Wakeling, "Preserving the organisation's life-blood: organisational change and the role of records management in the charity sector: a case study of The Children's Society", *Records Management Journal*, vol 14, no 3, 2004, pp116-123.

¹⁰⁹ C Peter Waagemann, *Handbook Of Record Storage And Space Management*, London, Quorum Books, 1983, p120.

¹¹⁰ For example: Terry Cook, "Electronic Records, Paper Minds: The revolution in information management and archives in the post-custodial and post-modernist era", *Archives and Manuscripts – The Journal of the Australian Society of Archivists*, vol 22, no 2, Nov 1994, pp300-328; Wendy Duff, "Ensuring the Preservation of Reliable Evidence: A Research Project Funded By The NHPRC", *Archivaria, The Journal of the Association of Canadian Archivists*, no

integrated records management in organisations to facilitate this. The development in quality standards for archives and records management, the links made by information professionals to general management and organisational concepts such as business process re-engineering, and legislation and government guidance on information access also promoted the contribution of efficient and effective records management to successful change management.

Literature Review Summary

The literature review, both at the outset and on-going during the writing of the thesis, firstly confirmed that the subject matter of the research – the records and records management of new town and related organisations – was a novel and unexplored area. Secondly, it verified the research areas and questions about management of records in a changing environment as professionally relevant and a topic that would benefit from further research and comment. Additionally, the literature provided an academic and professional context to the data collected in the research. A full list of sources consulted is listed in the Bibliography.

1.5 LIMITATIONS AND EXCLUSIONS

The main limitation of the thesis is that the records management function for the new town records is on-going, and it is not possible to follow the case study through from 1961 to the ultimate disposal of the very last record. Conversely, this currency adds strength to the thesis, as issues are ‘live’ and topical. Furthermore, the thesis can still conclude at an appropriate and reasonable point in time – the joining of CNT with URA in 1999. The merger process was drawn out over several years, and allusion is therefore made where relevant to events beyond 1999, as well as to relevant professional matters and examples outside of the timeframe of the case study. Terminology of bodies is that used contemporaneously. For example, the Public Record Office (PRO) is referred to as such, as it did not become The National Archives (TNA) until 2003.¹¹¹

The source material focuses on CNT, its legacy bodies and partners. This therefore excludes records of Scottish and Northern Irish new towns, and of the second Welsh new town, which did not pass to CNT. However they are referred to where appropriate for contextual and supporting information, and where they interact with CNT and its predecessor bodies on records management issues.

In terms of sources used, there are two minor points to record, both unavoidable and insignificant to the thrust and relevance of the thesis, especially given the source coverage and data saturation achieved. Firstly, not all corporation or CNT files which, judging by titles, may have contained

42, Fall 1996, pp28-45, Sally McInnes, “Electronic Records: the new archival frontier?”, *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, vol 19, no 2, 1998, pp211-220.

¹¹¹ Except for footnote/bibliographical sources produced by TNA.

useful information, survived destruction.¹¹² However, as record managers know, content may not in reality reflect the title, or if it does, it still may not meet the purpose of the research. Secondly, the aim was to be as comprehensive as possible in looking at the record-keeping history of twenty two new towns and CNT, and obtain both the points of view of the new town organisations and the external record offices with which they dealt. This was to ensure that the examples used in the thesis, the issues highlighted, and the arguments put forward were valid, and that a full picture was obtained by examining town and record office correspondence on the same matters. To this end the author consulted all local record offices which had received, or would receive, records from CNT towns. There was no right of public access, and the author was dependent on the discretion and goodwill of individual archivists. In one case the author was not offered direct personal perusal of the office file produced, but he was freely allowed to copy the material the archivist read out. In the record office where the author had been employed, only early documentation was made available, but that was the period, prior to his personal knowledge, of most interest to the author, and he had confidence that later periods were sufficiently covered by other sources.

1.6 ORGANISATION AND STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

Aside from the introduction and conclusion, the main text of the thesis is structured into two parts. An account of new town records management has not previously been compiled, so Part One (chapters 2-4) establishes parameters by providing the historical and organisational background to the new towns, and the new town and related bodies, and presents the case study of records management in these organisations. This largely descriptive and chronological account of the environment and key characteristics familiarises the reader with the complex subject matter. Additional facts and figures are provided in appendices. The historical narrative in Part One is necessary to identify the key records issues evaluated in Part Two. These chapters (5-8) present the main findings for the impetus for formal records management, its implementation and resourcing, and the effects of organisational change.

The thesis concludes in Chapter 9, firstly by referring back to the research questions, drawing together lessons from the study data and considering the applicability of more generalised conclusions. Then, recommendations, responding directly to the needs highlighted in these conclusions, are offered for how records management should be implemented to assist the operation and closure of finite and changing organisations, to the benefit of successor and legacy bodies, and to ensure future survival of, and access to, historic archives. Thirdly, there is reflection on the research design and process undertaken, and whether there is scope for further

¹¹² For example, Bracknell Development Corporation file: 305-2, “(Central) Record Office – general correspondence appertaining to services of and equipment for”, was merged into another file, which was destroyed on 30 June 1982 according to information contained in Bracknell Development Corporation file: “Central Record Office Folders”, nd [pre-1983], consignment HQ 686, EP Records Centre.

investigation, leading to a concluding statement on the contribution of the thesis to research and to practical records management.

PART ONE:

THE CASE STUDY

CHAPTER 2: THE NEW TOWNS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

This chapter briefly explains the new towns concept in world history, and more specifically, the development of the new towns movement in the United Kingdom.¹ The legislative framework for the British towns is covered, and the chapter concludes with an overview of the three phases of these towns. This leads into Chapter Three, where the organisations which managed the new town functions for the Government are examined.

2.1 THE ORIGINS OF THE NEW TOWNS

All towns are new at the point of origin, but not all are planned and developed as a single entity by a controlling body. The Romans built new towns in Britain. The more idealistic concept of new communities can be traced throughout history. Writers such as Plato in *The Republic*, Sir Thomas More in *Utopia*, Francis Bacon through to James Silk Buckingham in *Practical Evils and National Remedies* in the 1840s, can all be considered influential in formulating an ideal. There are examples of planned towns – as opposed to organic – in medieval England, such as the seaport of Winchelsea. The colonial settlements of New England were planned communities. Bath and Buxton were developed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as spa towns. London expanded with Georgian and Regency squares and parks. James Craig laid out Edinburgh's New Town. The planned village of Milton Abbas in Dorset was built by Joseph Damer to re-house the inhabitants of the original village which he destroyed to create his stately home and park.² Many Georgian and Victorian landlords built housing for their tenants and workers. The utopian and philanthropic aspects of new towns were demonstrated with practical examples of model villages for workers. Noted examples are New Lanark, Scotland, provided by Robert Owen (1771-1858), and Titus Salt's Saltaire, near Bradford (1853). There followed George Cadbury's Bournville, near Birmingham (1878), W H Lever's Port Sunlight, near Liverpool (1888), and in the early 1900s Joseph Rowntree's New Earswick, near York. The

¹ For the author's background reading on new towns, see the Bibliography, but, unless otherwise specified, factual information is taken from the following sources: Meryl Aldridge, *The British New Towns: A programme without a policy*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979; Richard Cole and David Woodhall, "English New Towns", unpublished compilation of information, Commission for the New Towns, 1992; Carol Corden, *Planned Cities: New Towns in Britain and America*, Beverly Hills/London, Sage Publications, 1977, (Sage Library of Social research vol 55); Hazel Evans, ed, *New Towns: The British Experience*, London, Charles Knight & Co, 1972; Gibberd, Hyde Harvey, and White, pp1-16; International New Towns Association, *Bulletin No 2: The New Towns of Britain*, London, New Towns Association, 1979; New Towns Association, *The New Towns*, London, New Towns Association, 1981; J H Nicholson, *New Communities in Britain: Achievements and Problems*, London, National Council of Social Service, 1961; Osborn and Whittick; Schaffer; Ray Thomas and Peter Cresswell, *The New Town Idea, prepared for the Course Team*, Milton Keynes, The Open University Press, 1973; multiple booklets on new towns produced by the Ministry of Housing and Local Government/Department of the Environment and Central Office of Information, and Town and Country Planning Association special issues on new towns (see Bibliography).

² J C D Smith, "A Planned Village", *Town and Country Planning*, vol 32, no 1, January 1964, p68.

tradition continued with the Duchy of Cornwall's project for Poundbury, Dorset, from 1989. In the nineteenth century some reformers began to advocate new settlements on a grand scale. In 1845 the London architect Moffatt proposed garden villages within ten miles of London (to re-house 350,000 Londoners), connected to the metropolis by the new railways. A Society for the Promoting of Industrial Villages was formed in 1883 advocating co-operative settlements.³

The origins of the British new towns movement of the twentieth century are, however, directly attributed to the private initiative of Ebenezer Howard, author of *Tomorrow, A Peaceful Path to Real Reform* (1898), republished in 1902 as *Garden Cities of Tomorrow*.⁴ His cities were part of a wider "Social City" concept, consisting of six pedestrianised garden cities with limited populations of up to 32,000, separated by a green belt but linked by canal and railway, and clustered around a larger central city that provided main facilities. Howard's town planning combined the best of urban and rural, through creating towns in the countryside. He reacted against slum conditions arising from the Industrial Revolution and the growth of Britain's population during the nineteenth century from ten million to forty million, and he had an antipathy to unregulated suburban sprawl along traffic routes. In 1899 he formed the Garden Cities Association.⁵ The lobbying of this body contributed both to the series of Town and Country Planning Acts regulating development from 1909, and to the new towns legislation of 1946.⁶

Howard put his ideas into practice in July 1902 when he and his supporters formed a company and purchased land at Letchworth, Hertfordshire.⁷ They set out to develop, as a private enterprise, a model town of balanced housing and industry, with services and amenities, for the resettlement of Londoners.⁸ The moderate success of this venture led in 1919 to registration of the Second Garden City Ltd, to repeat the exercise at Welwyn, Hertfordshire. A more powerful company replaced it in 1920 – Welwyn Garden City Ltd. Progress was slow however due to the economic depression of the 1920s and 1930s. Both garden cities were handicapped by lack of

³ de Soissons, *Welwyn Garden City*, pp25-27.

⁴ Ebenezer Howard (1850-1928) knighted 1927. *Who Was Who*, 1916-1928, p522.

⁵ The Garden Cities and Town Planning Association from 1919, and the Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) from 1946.

⁶ Wyndham Thomas, "The Ebenezer Howard Memorial Lecture: Letchworth...the first Garden City celebrating eighty years of progress towards a better environment 1903-1983", 1983, in New Towns Association file: 2/10/1, "Ebenezer Howard", 1978-1983, consignment 1380/36/5, EP Records Centre.

⁷ The Garden City Pioneer Company Ltd, re-launched in September 1903 as the First Garden City Ltd.

⁸ Letchworth never became a Government new town, unlike its sister garden city of Welwyn. The First Garden City Ltd was taken over by a property group in 1959-60. A private Bill led to the founding of a public authority, the Letchworth Garden City Corporation on 1 January 1963, to manage the estates (Letchworth Garden City Corporation Act, 1962). This was replaced by an industrial and provident society (Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation Act, 1995). See web sites: Letchworth Garden City, <http://www.letchworthgc.com> (accessed 2005), and Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation, <http://www.lgchf.com> (accessed 2005).

capital funds, but still produced two successful communities fulfilling many of the founders' objectives.⁹

Howard was not alone. Like-minded contemporary reformers and philanthropists developed several smaller-scale initiatives called 'Garden Suburbs', as an alternative to unattractive worker tenements being produced by both private enterprise and municipal authorities. For example, Hampstead Garden Suburb owed much to the Victorian reformer Octavia Hill, and later to the Letchworth Garden City pioneer Raymond Unwin.¹⁰ Sir Richard Paget instigated Wolverhampton Garden Suburb in 1907, on his Fallings Park estate. Other garden suburbs appeared at such places as Brentham, Stoke-on-Trent, Harborne, Sevenoaks, Leicester, and Manchester.¹¹ Elsewhere, garden city movements developed before the Great War in Europe, America and Japan, inspired by Howard and other planners, including Theodor Fritsch in Germany and Tony Garnier in France. The garden city model influenced planning of towns and suburbs throughout the British Empire, and became familiar in United Kingdom (UK) town planning before the Second World War. In the 1930s, Nazi Germany took up the idea of new and planned communities as it expanded.¹²

Whilst the "garden" concept spread, the desire for houses with lovely gardens could in practice be problematical. At Pitsea in Essex a 1907 sale catalogue of building plots forecast that "a real garden city without the aid of philanthropists and on a perfectly sound basis is likely to be created...", whilst in about 1920 *The Home Publishing Guide* described it as Pitsea Garden Village. However, in 1944 Patrick Abercrombie's *The Greater London Plan*, looked "with horror to the jumble of shacks and bungalows" which were subsequently swept away by Basildon New Town.¹³

Local authorities began at the turn of the twentieth century to provide newly-built housing for rent – council houses – to re-house slum dwellers. In the meantime, there was growing pressure for a national response by central government to the problems of inner city congestion. Evidence had been presented to a Royal Commission as early as 1899 "that the Central Government should see to it that towns and industrial districts do not continue to increase.... and need to protect one

⁹ de Soissons, *Welwyn Garden City*, pp24-32.

¹⁰ Octavia Hill (birth date unknown, died 1912). *Who Was Who*, 1897-1916, p339. Raymond Unwin (1863-1940) knighted 1932. *Who Was Who*, 1929-1940, p1379.

¹¹ Black Country Bugle, "Fallings Park Garden Suburb – the dream of superior housing for Wolverhampton's workers", *Black Country Bugle*, no 663, 12 May 2005, pp14-15; Black Country Bugle, "Fond family ties with the Fallings Park Garden Suburb", *Black Country Bugle*, no 667, 9 June 2005, pp12-13.

¹² Town and Country Planning Association, *Town and Country Planning Special Supplement: One Hundred Years of Tomorrow*, October 1998, London, Town and Country Planning Association, 1998.

¹³ Professor Patrick Abercrombie (1897-1957). *Who Was Who*, 1951-1960, p2; Patrick Abercrombie, *Greater London Plan, 1944, A Report prepared on behalf of the Standing Conference on London Regional Planning, at the request of the Minister of Town and Country*

town from growing into another”.¹⁴ In 1919 Frederic Osborn and others advocated Government sponsorship of a new towns programme.¹⁵ Howard commented that if Osborn waited on others, “you will be older than Methuselah before they start.”¹⁶ Indeed, the Government of the day saw no reason to go beyond subsidising new building in existing suburban locations.

However, issues of population and urbanisation continued to face successive governments. Neville Chamberlain’s Committee on Unhealthy Areas in 1921 had recommended state financial assistance for creating garden cities.¹⁷ Later, under his premiership, a Royal Commission on the Distribution of the Industrial Population led to the influential Barlow Report of 1940, which recommended examining the possibilities of “garden cities” and satellite towns as part of a “planned decentralisation” of population and industry from larger cities.¹⁸ The wartime Ministry of Works and Buildings was renamed Ministry of Works and Planning in response to the Barlow Report, and gave way to a new Ministry of Town and Country Planning in 1943. The Scott Report of 1942 recommended that urban developments in rural areas would need to be compact.¹⁹ Also in 1942, the Uthwatt Committee looked at urban congestion and the effect of suburban development on agricultural land.²⁰

Problems of inner city overcrowding were added to by World War Two bomb damage. In 1933 the Greater London Regional Planning Committee had proposed new towns and the dispersal of London’s population. In 1943, the London County Council (LCC), facing reconstruction of the devastated capital, returned to the idea. A former member of the Barlow Commission, Patrick Abercrombie, prepared reports proposing a greener and more open metropolis protected from suburban sprawl by a green belt, beyond which were ten satellite new towns to take displaced Londoners into self-sufficient communities.²¹

Planning, London, HMSO, 1945; Marion Hill, *Britain in Old Photographs: Basildon*, Stroud, Sutton Publishing, 1999, pp88-89.

¹⁴ Cole and Woodhall, section 1, p1.

¹⁵ Frederic J Osborn (1885-1978) knighted 1956. Estate Manager, Welwyn Garden City Ltd (1919-36), Honorary Secretary and Chairman of the Town and Country Planning Association (1936-61), Member of the New Towns Committee 1946. *Who Was Who*, 1971-1980, p597.

¹⁶ Schaffer, p23.

¹⁷ UK Committee on Unhealthy Areas, *Final Report*, London, HMSO, 1921. Chaired by A Neville Chamberlain (1869-1940), Prime Minister (1937-40). *Who Was Who*, 1929-1940, p235.

¹⁸ UK Royal Commission on the Distribution of the Industrial Population, *Report*, London, HMSO, 1940, (Cmd 6153), The Barlow Report. Chaired by Sir C Anderson Montague-Barlow (1868-1951) 1st baronet. *Who Was Who*, 1951-1960, pp778-779.

¹⁹ UK Committee on Land Utilisation in Rural Areas, *Report*, London, HMSO, 1942, (Cmd 6378), The Scott Report. Chaired by Sir Leslie F Scott (1869-1950). *Who Was Who*, 1941-1950, p1033.

²⁰ UK Expert Committee on Compensation & Betterment, *Final Report*, London, HMSO, 1942, (Cmd 6386), The Uthwatt Report. Chaired by Sir Augustus A Uthwatt (1879-1949) knighted 1941. *Who Was Who*, 1941-1950, p1177.

²¹ Greater London Regional Planning Committee, *Second Report*, London, Greater London Regional Planning Committee, 1933; J H Forshaw and Patrick Abercrombie, *The County of London Plan*, London, Macmillan and Co, 1943; Abercrombie, *Greater London Plan*.

As with many ideas, the concept of new towns moved in stages from the field of private philanthropists and entrepreneurs, into the area of local government initiatives, before being taken up on a national scale by central government. This was finally resolved in 1945-46 by the New Towns Committee under Lord Reith.²² The three reports produced by the Reith Committee, favouring development of new towns through Government-appointed development corporations, rather than through private enterprise or local authorities, resulted in the New Towns Act, 1946, covering England, Wales and Scotland.²³ In 1946 some twenty towns were envisaged for immediate development, eight of these around London. Fourteen were started in the first three years, and in all, thirty two towns were eventually established in the UK between 1948 and 1970.

The representations of local authorities and private enterprise were sufficient to ensure that the central government programme did not exclude them from undertaking 'new town' developments. Under the Town and Country Planning Act, 1962, the Northumberland villages of Cramlington and Killingworth were expanded by councils working with private enterprise.²⁴ A similar scheme resulted in South Woodham Ferrars, Essex in the 1970s.²⁵ Private enterprise developed the new villages of New Ash Green in Kent (1967) and Martlesham Heath in Suffolk (1975).

As an extension of the aims of the New Towns Act, the Town Development Act, 1952, enabled local government to redistribute urban populations.²⁶ Local authorities could enter into agreements to transfer tenants and compulsorily acquire land to provide houses, employment and community facilities, much like in a new town. The Government assisted financially. Over sixty expansion schemes were undertaken to transfer 'overspill' populations from Greater London, Birmingham, Bristol, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Salford, Walsall, and Wolverhampton to neighbouring authorities. For example, Tamworth in Staffordshire was the primary recipient for Birmingham under an official agreement between the two councils operating from 1965 to 1981.²⁷ The Buckinghamshire town of Bletchley used the Act to expand,

²² John C W Reith (1889-1971) 1st Baron Reith of Stonehaven (1940), Chairman of New Towns Committee (1946), Chairman of Hemel Hempstead Development Corporation (1947-50). *Who Was Who*, 1971-1980, p661.

²³ UK New Towns Committee, *Interim Report*, London, HMSO, 1946, (Cmd 6759); UK New Towns Committee, *Second Interim Report*, London, HMSO, 1946, (Cmd 6794); UK New Towns Committee, *Final Report*, London, HMSO, 1946, (Cmd 6876), The Reith Report; UK *New Towns Act*, 1946.

²⁴ UK *Town and Country Planning Act, 1962*, 10 & 11 Eliz 2, Ch 38, London, HMSO, 1962; J B Ross, "Northumberland's New Towns", *Town and Country Planning*, vol 32, no 1, January 1964, pp26-29; J B Ross, "Northumberland's New Towns: A Progress Report", *Town and Country Planning*, vol 33, no 1, January 1965, pp47-48.

²⁵ Essex County Council, *A Guide To South Woodham Ferrers, The New Riverside Country Town*, Chelmsford, Essex County Council, nd [1982]; Essex County Council, *A Riverside Country Town*, brochure, 1982.

²⁶ UK *Town Development Act, 1952*, 15 & 16 Geo 6 & 1 Eliz 2, Ch 54, London, HMSO, 1952.

²⁷ Department of the Environment Planning Research Programme, *Alternative Development Patterns: New Settlements*, HMSO, London 1993, p120; Nicholson, pp82-102; Central Office of Information, *The New Towns of Britain*, London, Central Office of Information, 1974, pp25-26; Town and Country Planning Association, *Town and Country Planning Special Issue: British New*

before it was subsumed in the designation of Milton Keynes New Town in 1967. In Scotland similar schemes to relieve Glasgow were undertaken under the Housing and Town Development (Scotland) Act, 1957.²⁸ Glenrothes New Town entered into a formal 'overspill' agreement with Glasgow City Council in 1959, but few families transferred so far east, preferring the closer new towns of East Kilbride and Cumbernauld.²⁹ In 1960-61 the LCC planned its own new town of 100,000 people at Hook in Hampshire to take population and industry. It was designed as a departure from the garden city concept, with complete segregation of pedestrians and vehicles in a compact town. It was not built, because Hampshire County Council preferred to have town expansion schemes at Andover and Basingstoke, which proceeded in conjunction with the LCC and its successor.³⁰ Like the new towns programme, town expansion schemes fell out of favour, and the 1952 Act was repealed by the Local Government and Housing Act, 1989.³¹

Moving urban populations to new or expanding towns was not the only response to inner city overcrowding and dereliction. Urban redevelopment in the 1950s-60s, with new estates and multi-storey accommodation, was also seen as a solution to old and basic housing and bomb-damaged sites. Ironically, many of these replacements posed their own problems by the 1970s, and led to Government-sponsored regeneration bodies of urban development corporations (UDCs) and housing action trusts (HATs).

When the Government turned away from new town development in the mid-1970s in favour of urban regeneration, private schemes were again mooted. Between 1983 and 1992 a group of house-builders and new town personalities operating as Consortium Developments Limited (CDL) proposed small new towns in the Home Counties. Four proposed schemes failed.³² One of the opponents, Michael Heseltine, himself announced a proposal in 1991 for a giant linear city stretching from London Docklands to Southend and Sheerness at the mouth of the Thames – the East Thames Corridor.³³ The merits or otherwise of building more new towns continued to be debated in town planning circles, and periodically caught public attention. For example, the *Urban Villages Report* of 1992 advocated good quality, high-density, mixed-use developments

Towns In The Seventies: their recent progress, current problems, and future roles, February 1977, London, Town and Country Planning Association, 1977, pp102-103; Author's knowledge as a resident in Tamworth.

²⁸ UK *Housing and Town Development (Scotland) Act, 1957*, 5 & 6 Eliz 2, Ch 38, London, HMSO, 1957.

²⁹ Keith Ferguson, *A History of Glenrothes*, Glenrothes, Glenrothes Development Corporation, 1982, pp79-81.

³⁰ The LCC was replaced in 1965 by the Greater London Council (GLC). Greater London Council, *The Planning of a New Town: Data and design based on a study for a New Town of 100,000 at Hook, Hampshire*, 4th reprint, London, Greater London Council, 1965, pp9-10.

³¹ Department of the Environment Planning Research Programme, p120; UK *Local Government and Housing Act, 1989*, Ch 42, London, HMSO, 1989, section 175, p170.

³² Department of the Environment Planning Research Programme, pp37-38.

³³ Michael R D Heseltine (born 1933) Secretary of State for the Environment (1979-83, 1990-92). *Who's Who* 2006, p1032.

on 100 acre sites, using best practice in urban design.³⁴ The British new towns example has inspired others around the world, especially in developing countries.³⁵ Although the creation in the UK of new towns by the state has ceased, the towns created will endure.

2.2 THE NEW TOWNS LEGISLATION

Various New Towns Acts were enacted from 1946, as well as legislation causing minor amendments. Significant legislation is discussed below. The New Towns Act, 1946, authorised the Minister of Town and Country Planning,³⁶ after appropriate public consultation, to designate areas of land for the building of towns, to appoint corporations to develop them, and to fund the corporations via loans. The corporations were not local authorities and had no power to levy rates. Income was to be generated by sale or lease of assets. The Government rejected the Reith Committee's recommendation, which had been in line with Ebenezer Howard, that new town land should be given in perpetuity to the statutory companies charged with building them. Land tenure in the new towns is therefore conventional.

The corporations were given wide-ranging but circumscribed powers to acquire, hold, manage and dispose of land and other property within the designated areas; to carry out building and other operations; to provide water, electricity, gas, sewerage and other services; to carry on any business in the new town. Generally, they could do anything necessary for the purposes of the new town. A corporation was empowered to acquire land regardless of existing ownership and controls, and could be obliged to purchase property offered to it. Such powers were necessary for the corporations, but caused resentment amongst some landowners subjected to compulsory purchase orders, native inhabitants who did not want their environment and way of life changed, and local councils which felt usurped by non-elected agencies of central government. At Basildon, the Residents' Protection Association (formed in 1946 to oppose the building of the new town) was credited with costing the Labour MP his seat at the 1950 General Election. Opposition was more muted by 1955 when the *Southend Standard* reported that "most residents were now 'very satisfied' with the compensation".³⁷

³⁴ Tony Aldous, *Urban Villages: A Concept for creating mixed-use urban developments on a sustainable scale*, London, Urban Villages Group, , 1992.

³⁵ United Nations, *Interregional Seminar On New Towns, London, 4-19 June 1973*, New York, United Nations, 1974, (United Nations Development Programme, DP/UN/INT-72-053); Mervyn Dobbin, "The Thai New Towns: Models for Implementation, An Appraisal of UK New Town Experience", Centre for New Town Development Studies unpublished report, De Montfort University, Milton Keynes, 1995.

³⁶ Subsequently retitled (during the period of creating new towns) as Minister of Local Government and Planning (Jan-Oct 1951), Minister of Housing and Local Government (1951-70), and Secretary of State for the Environment (1970-97). Susan Kidd, *New Towns In The U.K.*, Department of the Environment Information Series, LIB/INF/12, September 1977, London, Departments of the Environment and Transport, 1977, pp24-26.

³⁷ Hill, p23.

The legislation concentrated on the mechanisms for building towns, and whilst it was recognised that there would be three phases – development, consolidation, and long-term management – governance beyond the development stage was not clarified. Nevertheless, it was anticipated that completed towns would pass to local authority control, as the 1946 Act gave the Minister power to wind up a corporation by making an order providing for “the transfer of the undertaking or any part.... to such local authority (being an authority within whose area the new town is situated).... Or in so far as the undertaking consists of a statutory undertaking to such statutory undertakers as may be specified”.³⁸

However, as some English new towns approached their target populations in the late 1950's, the Conservative Government decided to retain control of remaining development and consolidation. The New Towns Act, 1959 was described by the Minister, Henry Brooke,³⁹ as an interim arrangement to be reviewed in ten to twenty years time.⁴⁰ It allowed for the creation of a further quasi-government body to receive the assets and liabilities of individual English and Welsh corporations upon their closure. This legislation was criticised by Labour politicians – founders of the un-elected corporations – as creating a remote, centralised, undemocratic bureaucracy that would act as a “disposals board” for selling off publicly owned assets to the private sector. In practice, the Commission for the New Towns (CNT), far from being short-lived, existed for nearly 38 years, and then continued into the twenty first century as a legal entity, but combined with another government body under the name of English Partnerships (EP).⁴¹ The first towns transferred to CNT in 1962. The New Towns Acts were consolidated by the New Towns Act, 1965 in England and Wales, and the New Towns (Scotland) Act, 1968.⁴² The 1946 Act had been administered separately in England and Scotland, and this was recognised legislatively by the 1968 Act.⁴³ Responsibility for Welsh corporations transferred from MHLG to the Secretary of State for Wales in 1965.⁴⁴

³⁸ Howard Ruffman, “An Organisational History of the Commission for the New Towns”, unpublished report, Commission for the New Towns, 1998, chapter 1, p1; New Statesman, “A Chance for Local Democracy”, *New Statesman, The Week-end Review*, vol 55, no 1401, 18 January 1958, London, The Statesman and Nation Publishing Co, 1958, p61.

³⁹ Henry Brooke (1903-1984) Minister of Housing and Local Government and Minister for Welsh Affairs (1957-61). *Who Was Who*, 1981-1990, p94.

⁴⁰ UK *New Towns Act, 1959, Ch 62*, London, HMSO, 1959.

⁴¹ English Partnerships (EP) was the operating name for the Urban Regeneration Agency (URA), a NDPB established in 1993, with which CNT was combined in 1999. See Chapter 3.5.

⁴² UK *New Towns Act, 1965, Ch 59*, London, HMSO, 1965; UK *New Towns Act (Scotland) Act, 1968, Ch 16*, London, HMSO, 1968.

⁴³ ‘“The Scottish New Towns – A Policy Statement”, Scottish Economic Planning Department, September 1981’, in CNT Glen House file: 7/3, “Chairman’s Conference 1979 & 1980 & 1981”, 1979-1981, consignment CNT 470, EP Records Centre.

⁴⁴ New Town Development Corporations, *New Towns Act 1965 Reports of the Development Corporations*, HMSO, London, 1965-1981, *passim*.



The New Towns Act (Northern Ireland), 1965, differed from the other Acts in dealing more with regional development.⁴⁵ Designation orders indicated an area additional to the new town over which there was unified planning control. The Ulster legislation also gave the development bodies – called commissions – the functions of district councils paving the way for each town in time to be administered by a single municipal authority. It allowed for an Advisory Committee for each town to comment and make representations.⁴⁶

The 1960s Labour Government remained hostile to transferring new town assets to CNT and Prime Minister Harold Wilson⁴⁷ declared:

“...at the right time we shall change the law and take powers to dissolve the Commission...local authorities...should eventually be responsible for managing all publicly-owned housing when a New Town is fully developed...non-housing assets...raise special problems which are very complex and difficult.”⁴⁸

Nothing was done before the Conservatives returned to power in 1970, with a commitment to CNT’s role:

“For some time past uncertainty about the future of the Commission has caused uneasiness among the staff, made it difficult to formulate a long-term programme and rendered pointless any serious review of the Commission’s organisation and of their capacity for taking over more towns. With the uncertainty about the future removed, this can now be done.”⁴⁹

The return of a Labour Government in 1974 was followed by the New Towns (Amendment) Act, 1976, which provided for the transfer to district councils of housing and related assets by corporations and CNT in those towns in England and Wales which had been substantially completed.⁵⁰ This process took some twenty years to discharge. The Act did not transfer commercial and industrial assets. The year 1976 was considered bad for the new towns movement, as a general economic recession led to cuts in capital expenditure on new towns, and the planned Stonehouse new town in Scotland was abandoned. New towns were criticised for depopulating cities and depriving them of jobs. A GLC report opposed further new towns as detrimental to London’s renewal. Remarks by Environment Secretary Peter Shore fuelled media attacks on new towns.⁵¹ In 1977 Shore announced that eight older corporations were to be wound

⁴⁵ UK *New Towns Act (Northern Ireland), 1965, Ch 13*, Belfast, Northern Ireland, London, HMSO, 1965.

⁴⁶ Craigavon Development Commission, *Craigavon New City Second Report on the Plan*, Craigavon, Craigavon Development Commission, 1967, pp8-9; Schaffer, pp323-324.

⁴⁷ J Harold Wilson (1916-1995) Prime Minister (1964-70, 1974-76). *Who Was Who*, 1991-1995, p599.

⁴⁸ Commission for the New Towns, *New Towns Act, 1965, Report of the Commission for the New Towns for the period ended 31st March, 1968*, London, HMSO, 1968, p19. [Hereafter: CNT, *Annual Report*, [year]].

⁴⁹ CNT, *Annual Report*, 1970-1971, p4.

⁵⁰ UK *New Towns (Amendment) Act 1976, Ch 68*, London, HMSO, 1976.

⁵¹ Peter D Shore (1924-2001) Secretary of State for the Environment (1976-79). *Who Was Who*, 2001-2005, p477.

up within five years, and reduced the target populations of the six youngest by over 300,000.⁵² In 1978 he approved a limited programme of sales of commercial and industrial assets.⁵³

The Conservative Government of 1979 announced a policy of large-scale freehold sales of new town assets, then its intention that CNT would be wound up.⁵⁴ The Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 empowered the Secretary of State to give general consent to freehold disposals and to direct new town bodies to surrender sums realised through disposals.⁵⁵ This Act also allowed creation of UDCs. A leading new towns figure, Wyndham Thomas, had recommended development corporations in 1978 as the means to renew inner areas of London Docklands and Liverpool, but Peter Shore would not create agencies within areas controlled by Labour councils.⁵⁶ The Conservative Michael Heseltine was persuaded, and despite a general policy of cutting public sector spending, the Government moved in favour of urban regeneration quangos.

The new disengagement role for CNT was formalised in the New Towns Act, 1981, amended by the New Towns and Urban Development Corporations Act, 1985.⁵⁷ In 1983 the Government postponed the expected closure of CNT by announcing that CNT would receive the commercial and industrial assets of six new town development corporations to be wound-up from 1985, and possibly the three north east corporations later. By 1985 as a realisation agency, CNT was “proud to play an important part in the Government’s privatisation policy”, whilst stressing that this took the form of “normalising” the new towns by enabling local authorities to assume full control side by side with CNT’s disengagement.⁵⁸

In fact CNT was retained for all remaining English corporations and one Welsh, culminating in Milton Keynes in 1992. In 1993 Environment Secretary John Gummer announced that CNT would close by 1998.⁵⁹ However, in 1996 the Government set this aside to utilise a reformed CNT as a residuary and disengagement body from 1998 for the assets and liabilities of the eight

⁵² New Towns Association file: 2/11, “Overall Management & Administration of New Towns”, 1975-1978, consignment 343, EP Records Centre; Kidd, p1. The eight named for closure were Basildon, Bracknell, Corby, Harlow, Redditch, Runcorn, Skelmersdale, Stevenage. The closures of Basildon, Redditch and Skelmersdale were subsequently amended to later dates.

⁵³ National Audit Office, *Department of the Environment: Disposal of New Town Assets*, National Audit Office Report by the Comptroller and Auditor General, HMSO, London, 1986, p5. [Hereafter: NAO, *Disposal of New Town Assets*].

⁵⁴ A date was not specified.

⁵⁵ NAO, *Disposal of New Town Assets*, p5; UK *Local Government, Planning and Land Act, 1980*, Ch 65, London, HMSO, 1980.

⁵⁶ Wyndham Thomas (born 1924) Peterborough Development Corporation General Manager (1968-83). *Who's Who*, 2006, p2231.

⁵⁷ UK *New Towns Act 1981*, Ch 64, HMSO, London, 1981; UK *New Towns and Urban Development Corporations Act, 1985*, Ch 5, London, HMSO, 1985.

⁵⁸ Commission for the New Towns, *Review 1985*, London, City and Commercial Communications, 1985, np.

⁵⁹ John Selwyn Gummer (born 1939) Secretary of State for the Environment, 1993-1997. *Who's Who*, 2006, p927.

remaining UDCs, and of the six HATs if they closed within CNT's lifetime. CNT's lifespan would be reviewed in 2000.⁶⁰

The opposition Labour Party had formulated a regional economic development strategy in the 1990s.⁶¹ The 'New Labour' Government returned in 1997 merged two ministries to create the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) under Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott.⁶² A White Paper, *Building Partnerships for Prosperity*, envisaged nine regional development agencies (RDAs). It proposed that CNT and the national capability of the Urban Regeneration Agency (URA), known as "English Partnerships" (EP), merge by 1 April 2000. They would work towards a smooth transfer of functions to be carried out by RDAs, and close when RDAs were operating as mature and autonomous bodies.⁶³ New legislation created the RDAs.⁶⁴

Subsequently, DETR decided that the new body would exist until 2003. The merger was brought forward, and after several delays the merged national body was launched in May 1999. It retained the separate statutory bases of CNT and URA, but was to be known as "English Partnerships".⁶⁵ DETR became the Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions (DTLR) in 2001. In 2002 EP was placed under the new Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), and in 2006 under the new Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). A review in 2002 gave EP an on-going remit as the Government's national regeneration agency, with an additional key role in the Government's housing strategy. A review in 2006-07 led to plans to replace EP and the Housing Corporation, and some DCLG functions, with a new statutory body, to be called "Communities England".⁶⁶

⁶⁰ CNT Records file: 30/1/24, "Records – General and Policy – Post 1998: General", 1992-1998, EP Records Centre.

⁶¹ Regional Policy Commission, *Renewing The Regions: Strategies for Regional Economic Development, Report of the Regional Policy Commission*, Sheffield Hallam University, PAVIC Publications, 1996.

⁶² John L Prescott (born 1938) Deputy Prime Minister (1997-2007). *Who's Who*, 2006, p1820.

⁶³ Ruffman, chapter 1, pp4-5.

⁶⁴ UK *Regional Development Agencies Act, 1998, Ch 45*, London, HMSO, 1998.

⁶⁵ As URA staff took the executive jobs in the merged management team for CNT/URA they decided to continue operating as "English Partnerships". Author's Knowledge.

⁶⁶ This remains the situation at the time of submission of this thesis. The Housing Corporation was established in 1964 to stimulate non-profit-making housing associations that built and managed accommodation for letting to the general public for cost rents, or for exclusive occupation by their members on a group ownership basis. It regulates, funds and promotes proper performance of registered social landlords (over 2,200 in 1998). The Housing Act 1996 widened the regulatory role to include new types of landlord such as local housing companies. Estates Gazette, "The Chartered Auctioneers' and Estate Agents' Institute - The Housing Corporation", *The Estates Gazette*, vol 204, October 14 1967, pp153,155,158,160; Housing Corporation, *Co-Ownership Housing*, London, Housing Corporation, 1968; Housing Corporation,

2.3 THE NEW TOWNS

Each new town has its own character, and most have a pre-designation history. None of them were green field sites. Milton Keynes, generally perceived as very modern, was developed around three towns and eighteen villages and hamlets. Some towns were well established, such as the county town of Northampton and the cathedral city of Peterborough. In those places, the corporations, rather than building or redeveloping an entire town, developed specific areas. Despite such differences, a common thread was evident. The recurring master plan theme was for self-contained residential neighbourhoods with schools and other community facilities, centres for shops and offices, distinct industrial areas, new road networks, and attention to landscaping and provision of open spaces.

Whereas existing towns developed over centuries in a piece-meal fashion, each new town was developed within a comprehensive master plan as a complete entity. They avoided urban sprawl, unplanned ribbon development, and single-class housing estates. In Radburn, New Jersey, USA, planned in 1928, Clarence Stein and Henry Wright designed a residential layout where vehicular and pedestrian traffic were separated.⁶⁷ The Radburn Model was widely followed in British new towns.

New towns set trends for British town planning and provided an environment for innovation and experimentation. Stevenage had the first pedestrianised high street; Milton Keynes had the first active solar house (1974), the first small business centre (1979), the first multiplex cinema (1985), the first energy park (1986), a covered shopping area that when opened in 1979 was the biggest in Britain; Warrington had the first science park.⁶⁸

In 1977 Maurice Ash⁶⁹ commented that new towns were utilised without being understood and that this abuse contributed to any hostility they engendered. He felt that the Labour Party had in practice used them predominantly as a vehicle for public housing, whilst Conservative Harold Macmillan⁷⁰ who espoused new towns as the symbol of post-war rejuvenation had pursued a house-building programme that was antipathetic to the new town purpose.⁷¹

The Housing Corporation, London, Housing Corporation, 1968; *Whitaker's Almanack 1998*, 130th edition, London, TSO, 1998, p313.

⁶⁷ Clarence S Stein, *Toward New Towns for America*, Cambridge, Mass/London, MIT Press, 1966, pp38-73.

⁶⁸ Commission for the New Towns, "50 Years of New Towns" souvenir pack, 1996; New Towns Association, *The New Towns*, pp12-13; Milton Keynes Development Corporation, *Insight: Milton Keynes 1967-1992, Celebrating 25 Years of Achievement*, special edition, Milton Keynes, Milton Keynes Development Corporation, 1992.

⁶⁹ Maurice A Ash (1917-2003) planner. *Who Was Who*, 2001-2005, p19.

⁷⁰ M Harold Macmillan (1894-1986) Minister of Housing and Local Government (1951-54), Prime Minister (1957-63). *Who Was Who*, 1981-1990, pp726-727.

⁷¹ Maurice Ash, "viewpoint 1", *Town and Country Planning Special Issue: British New Towns In the Seventies: their recent progress, current problems, and future roles*, February 1977, Town and Country Planning Association, 1977, pp58-60.

The Mark 1 Towns, 1946-1950

Between 1946 and 1950 one Welsh and eleven English towns were designated – known subsequently as the Mark 1 New Towns. Eight were conceived as a ring around London to deal with metropolitan ‘overspill’, namely Stevenage (1946), Crawley, Hemel Hempstead, and Harlow (1947), Hatfield and Welwyn Garden City (1948), Basildon and Bracknell (1949). Some of these sites were proposed in Abercrombie’s *Greater London Plan*. Four others were for diversifying employment and meeting local housing needs – Newton Aycliffe (1947) and Peterlee (1948) in the North East, Cwmbran in South Wales (1949), and Corby (1950) in the East Midlands. Harlow and Basildon in Essex were intended to be the largest settlements. Additionally, in Scotland, came East Kilbride (1947), and Glenrothes (1948). All Scottish new towns were to assist dispersal of population and industry from congested urban areas and encourage economic development, but Glenrothes was also initially to aid movement of coal production to east Scotland from declining coalfields in the west.

The Mark 2 Towns, 1950-1964

New towns were not the preserve of socialist politicians. A second phase came under the Conservative Government of 1950-64, complementing Macmillan’s house-building programme. In the 1950s only one town was designated, at Cumbernauld, Scotland (1955), as the Government seemed to prefer fostering local government initiative via the Town Development Act, 1952. However, the programme was rejuvenated at the end of the decade when the focus moved from London to the West Midlands and the North: Skelmersdale (1961), Dawley (1963), Redditch, Runcorn, and Washington (1964). Livingston in Scotland was designated in 1962. These Mark 2 towns were of increased scale.

The Mark 3 Towns, 1965-1976

The largest and most ambitious towns came under another Labour Government, and were located across the UK – Milton Keynes and Peterborough (1967), Northampton and Warrington (1968), and Central Lancashire (1970). Dawley was re-designated as the larger Telford in 1968. In Wales, Newtown was designated (1967), and in Scotland, Irvine (1966). Four Northern Ireland towns came into being at Craigavon (1965), Antrim and Ballymena (1966), and Londonderry (1969), but their controlling bodies received the slightly different nomenclature of ‘development commissions’, and they reported to the Government of Northern Ireland. Milton Keynes, destined to be the most famous of British new towns, was, from the outset, described in literature and on its boundary signs as the ‘new city’. It has a ‘city centre’ and a ‘city church’, although it does not to date have the official status of a city.⁷²

⁷² The town applied unsuccessfully for city status in 1992 and 2002 when the honour was conferred to mark, respectively, the 40th and 50th anniversaries of the accession of Queen Elizabeth II.

The third generation towns had a role in reviving and developing regional economies, as well as housing 'overspill' populations and this tied in with the Government's shift towards regionalisation in planning policy. Regional economic planning councils and boards were established in 1964-65. A *Strategic Plan for the South East*, outlining development to 1981, was published, serving as a model for further regional strategies.⁷³ Also, in the case of three new towns (Peterborough, Northampton, Warrington), development was intended as a joint venture with local authorities.

Central Lancashire proved to be the last town built under the New Towns Act. In 1972, the Conservative Government designated a third Welsh site, Llantrisant, but abandoned the project due to local opposition. In 1973 a new town was suggested for Maplin in Essex to support a proposed third London airport, but this project also foundered.⁷⁴ Stonehouse in Scotland, designated in 1973, was abandoned by the Labour Government in 1976 after building work had actually started.

2.4 IMPACT OF THE NEW TOWNS

The new towns were controversial. Contemporary reports show that they were not welcomed by many indigenous inhabitants, whilst those who developed the towns were enthusiastic about their achievements. Employment with a new town body was valued, not least because of high salaries, good pension and redundancy schemes, and other beneficial employment conditions. A careers booklet plays down financial reward, but certainly reflects the 'special' aspect of being an employee:

"If you are looking for an easy, well paid, permanent 9 to 5 job, or if you are interested only in making money, read no further. The New Towns are not for you. But if you want to help your fellow men and women, receive a fair salary for the job, with good prospects of early promotion and are prepared to work hard, maybe this booklet will help you in your search. Few people realise how much Britain's New Towns – unequalled anywhere in the world – are contributing towards improving the quality of life for so many people."⁷⁵

The author's perception as a resident of, and visitor to, new towns is that many of those who live and work in them like them. The media and wider population appeared to enjoy criticising new towns for many years. For example, Milton Keynes – home of the concrete cows – was the butt of jokes, despite many other features, and its economic success. More positively, new towns provided 500,000 homes, and wide-ranging amenities, for over two million people. They

⁷³ Ministry of Housing and Local Government, *Strategic Plan for the South East: Report of the South East Joint Planning Team*, London, HMSO, 1970.

⁷⁴ Department of the Environment, *The Maplin Project, Designation Area For The New Town - A Consultation Document*, London, HMSO, 1973.

⁷⁵ Dennis Kirby, *Careers in New Town Building*, East Kilbride, Product Support (Graphics), nd [1969], p3.

provided over a million jobs, and in general had lower unemployment rates than inner city areas. The disposals programme generated billions of pounds for the Treasury.

However, some aims failed to materialise. Population targets were either exceeded or not reached. Ideals of self-containment and economic viability were dissipated as older new towns, largely completed in accordance with their master plans, lost their 'newness' and became 'ordinary' – part of a wider network of settlements, or indeed became satellite or commuter towns for neighbouring areas. Some loans to new town corporations had to be written off. Social balance proved hard to achieve. Much of the architecture, coinciding with post-World War Two modernism, may be considered drab or ugly. Many buildings, which when new were deemed by architects and town planners as superior replacements for slums, did not weather well due to unsuitable construction designs and materials. This charge is not so true of pre-war buildings at Welwyn Garden City, or of many edifices in later towns such as Milton Keynes and Telford. Whatever the views on the merits or success of the new towns movement, its impact on British town planning, and the legacy of the towns themselves, is undeniable and tangible.

CHAPTER 3: THE NEW TOWN BODIES

This chapter gives an overview of the administrative history, structure and functions of the new town organisations.¹ The complexities of these bodies, the scale of CNT's inheritance, the quantity and frequency of closures, transfers and re-organisations are revealed without detailed historical analysis of every departmental change within each organisation. This overview sets the organisational background to operating records management in such bodies, which will be covered in Chapter 4.

The corporations are dealt with collectively because of their common features, and are examined first because they mostly pre-date CNT. More detailed attention is focused on CNT as their residuary body and the main focus of the case study. The chapter then looks – again collectively and in less detail than at CNT – at the urban regeneration bodies with which CNT was connected, and at the new body formed to take the combined new town and regeneration role into the twenty first century, EP. This overview confirms that the complexities of organisational change and consequential issues for records management are not a unique feature of any one body, or only of new town bodies, and that lessons to be drawn through this thesis may be generally applied to organisations in a state of change.

3.1 NEW TOWN DEVELOPMENT CORPORATIONS²

Purpose

Thirty two UK development corporations undertook the development of designated new town areas with commercial, industrial and residential sectors, and the social infrastructure and facilities to support new communities. They owned and developed thousands of acres of land and homes, and hundreds of thousands of square metres of factory, office and shop floor-space between 1947 and 1996. A development corporation in its prime was the dominant local public body.

Financial basis

Corporations operated by taking sixty year loans from the Government. In the English new towns alone over a forty year period public investment on the basis of sixty year loans totalled over £4 billion gross. The loans were repaid with interest at the full ruling rate for long-term gilt-edged securities. At each year-end, if income was insufficient to meet loan charges and other expenditure, more was borrowed from the Government. The Government controlled the annual

¹ Unless otherwise specified, the factual sources of information for this chapter are the new towns works cited in Chapter 2, footnote 1.

² Unless otherwise specified, information in this section is taken from: New Town Development Corporations of England and Wales, *New Towns Act 1946/1965/1981, Reports of the Development Corporations*, London, HMSO, 1946-1992, *passim*.

budget and each development scheme. Without power to levy rates, corporations generated additional income by sale or lease of land and property.

The New Towns programme was financially healthy until the 1970s, with early corporations moving into net surplus. But then inflation in the national economy meant that the corporations' obligation to borrow only from the Government, and at interest rates higher than in the open market, burdened later corporations during their heaviest investment in land acquisition and infrastructure. Periodically, Parliament had to write off the accumulated debt. By March 1986 the new town bodies' outstanding debt to the National Loans Fund was £3.8 billion, but by December nearly £1.7 billion of this had been extinguished through the Government's restructuring of remaining towns.³

Master Plan

The first task of a corporation was to draw up an outline plan, then a master plan showing the land use and phased development of the designated area.⁴ This studied the geography of the new town area and surrounding region, and set population and employment targets. Once the plan had negotiated public consultation and ministerial approval, it served as the development blueprint. The master plan was zoned to allow for open space, industrial estates, a town centre for retail and civic buildings, and housing areas. The latter were usually based on self-sufficient 'neighbourhood units' which contained schools, shops, meeting places, and churches. Where appropriate, existing villages and towns were incorporated into plans, and formed natural 'neighbourhoods'.

Property and Development

Following master plan approval, a corporation would buy land to build on itself, or to lease/sell to others to develop. From 1969 new town bodies were allowed to raise money to fund schemes by leasing or selling an asset to an investor who then leased the asset back to the new town body. Corporations built houses to sell and to rent, and licenced private housing development on new town land. They built factories, shops and offices and actively attracted commercial and industrial employers with high-profile press and television advertising. Memorable campaigns in the 1980s included the red balloon adverts for Milton Keynes, and the Roman Centurion adverts for Peterborough. Corporations were major landowners and landlords, and their development activities provided significant sources of employment in local economies.

For their own developments in the designated areas, corporations and CNT did not need planning approval from local authorities. They obtained authorisation for planning and development from

³ National Audit Office, *Disposal of New Town Assets*, p5.

⁴ Master plans consulted appear in the Bibliography, for example: Arthur Ling, *Runcorn new town Master Plan, prepared for the Runcorn Development Corporation*, Runcorn, Runcorn Development Corporation, 1967.

the minister under section 6(1) and (2) of the New Towns Act, 1965, and for construction and authorisation of expenditure under section 42(1) and (2). Section 6 became Section 7(1) and (2) of the New Towns Act, 1981. If the corporation itself developed land it required no further consent, but a private developer required further authorisation from the corporation, or CNT as its legal successor, under section 7(2) of the 1981 Act. These authorisation files, usually referred to by new town staff by their section numbers (for example, as “the 7(2) files”), were important records within corporations/CNT. This power did not mean that corporations/CNT were constituted as local planning authorities. Developers in designated areas, including the corporations, still had to obtain building regulations and fire precaution approvals from statutory authorities. Corby for example, even though it could give planning approval for one-off private houses built on single plots sold to individuals, adopted the practice of requiring the owner/developer to seek planning permission from the local council.⁵

Services

Corporations contributed the major infrastructure but were not expected to provide all services. They worked with relevant bodies to co-ordinate timing, scale and implementation of service provision as towns grew. They liaised with local authorities of all tiers, hospital boards (later regional health authorities), utilities for water, gas, electricity, and telephone undertakings (later privatised companies), and other public bodies such as post, fire, police, and railway.

Corporations were responsible for the general layout and site works within their designated areas, for road-building and general amenities, and where necessary for water schemes, drainage, sewerage systems and disposal works. They had to provide detailed technical and environmental solutions. Although normally local authorities and area water undertakings were responsible for the provision of water supply and drainage, much expenditure was entailed in advance of building programmes, and costs could not be recouped from rates for many years to come. The New Towns Act, 1946, allowed corporations to borrow money from central government to undertake necessary works, and maintain them until the local authority or water undertaking could assume normal responsibility. Ownership then transferred at an agreed sum, with any loss borne by the corporation. For example, Harlow had to sink wells and build pumping stations and a large reservoir to ensure a water supply, whilst Stevenage had to night pump from boreholes. A joint sewerage scheme had to operate for these two towns and Welwyn Garden City for many years because there was no alternative provision.

Corporations could neither provide, nor insist that others provide, all desired services. They could make land available and obtain limited public funding as a basis for negotiations and agreements, but there was no national pattern. Corporations often had to compete with existing areas for provision of infrastructure and services, especially roads. In turn, inhabitants of areas of

a county outside of a new town, often resented what was perceived as preferential funding for new town projects at their expense.⁶

Roads were fundamental to the success of new towns. The responsibility for main roads lay with county councils, county boroughs (to 1974), and the Ministry (later Department) of Transport. As main roads were both made necessary by the creation of new towns, and yet were also beyond the needs of new towns, costs were shared between the authorities through local agreements. Lack of funds often meant that dual carriageways were built as single carriageways, with land reserved for future dualling. This was later obviated by allocation of separate blocks of funding for new town roads. Responsibility for maintenance of classified roads normally passed to the highway authority on completion for a payment either agreed or arbitrated by the Minister. Corporations had to provide the internal access and service roads, which were then normally adopted by district authorities. However because of the lack of rate income, corporations could maintain roads for years before council adoption.

The New Towns Act, 1946, included a special power for corporations to run trolley bus services, but it was not exercised, as by the late 1940's trams were outmoded. Public transport facilities varied. New towns were noted for pedestrian-only areas, encouragement of cycling, and for providing services in close proximity to reduce reliance on cars and public transport. Most towns were built in proximity to railway lines and stations. However as time progressed, towns both housed a large number of commuters (London ring towns particularly) and became themselves centres attracting their own commuters. Milton Keynes was designed with a grid-road and round-about traffic system.

The supply of gas and electricity and the provision of telephone facilities presented fewer problems than roads and water. If demand could not be identified in advance, corporations made a financial contribution, which was refunded in full or part when buildings were occupied, and actual consumption measured. New towns were noted for attempts to provide environmentally-preferred underground cabling for telephones and televisions.

Once essential services were installed, corporations built houses, factories and shops, although they could sell or lease sites to local authorities or private enterprise to develop. Every project required authorisation from the Ministry of Housing and Local Government/Department of the Environment (MHLG/DoE) and the Treasury. Following the New Towns Amendment Act, 1976, rental housing assets were transferred, usually before wind-up, to the local authority or a housing association. Where this was not done, the role of landlord and transfer fell to CNT.

⁵ Catalogue: "Corby Development Corporation Records and Archives Volume 1 - Papers - Box Nos. 1-222", 1985-1986, np, Northamptonshire Record Office.

⁶ As an employee at Buckinghamshire County Council in the late 1980s unsubstantiated opinions were expressed to the author that Milton Keynes received all the money at the expense of the rest of the county.

From 1990 the Conservative Government, in order to encourage a diversity of home-ownership, gave tenants the right to choose their landlord at transfer. The Conservatives in 1970-74 and 1979-97 also actively encouraged tenants to purchase their homes, leading to disposal of thousands of new town houses.

Corporations had to build self-contained and balanced communities. They could not build educational facilities, libraries, hospitals, post offices, police stations, burial grounds and places of worship, which all remained within the remit of relevant local education authorities, public bodies and churches. However, they could provide fully-serviced sites for these developments, and transfer land to these bodies. Corporations often provided temporary accommodation for health facilities and churches until permanent premises could be secured. There was a high demand for community centres for new populations. Corporations and CNT could contribute to social development by grants from their major and minor amenity funds.

Carparks, public art, and many leisure, cultural, social and sporting facilities were created. New towns were required to make generous provision of open space, and local topography was utilised to create networks of public gardens and parks, sports grounds and woodlands, often linked into footpath, bridleway and cycleway systems. There was notable expenditure on landscaping, and Milton Keynes for example was dubbed “the city of trees”. Technically, district councils should have provided and maintained open spaces for recreation, but it was often left to corporations to do so, or to assist councils with capital contributions.

Transfer of community assets by corporations or CNT – normally to local authorities that appeared to be the ‘natural’ successors – was an important but complicated disengagement task. These transfers were made by conveyance. Usually, the properties were encumbered with financial liabilities as they cost more to maintain than the revenue they generated. Therefore community related asset (CRA) packages had to be put together, whereby a property was combined with a self-financing asset such as a shopping complex, to attract the intended recipient. Sometimes specific bodies were set up to continue corporation responsibilities – for example, MKDC transferred assets and funds to a Parks Trust to manage much of Milton Keynes’ parkland from 1992, rather than pass it to the local council. When some of the later corporations closed, newly created bodies funded by local authorities and CNT continued their marketing. For example, Peterborough Development Agency (PDA) was set up in 1988 and Telford Development Agency (TDA) in 1991.

Organisation

Each corporation was created within a couple of months of the designation of a new town area. In fact embryonic corporations emerged from advisory committees set up by the Minister when planning each town. For example, a committee for Harlow was set up 1946 under the

chairmanship of civil servant Sir Ernest Gowers who had been Senior Regional Commissioner in London during the War. He became first chairman of the corporation in 1947.⁷

Corporations had boards of up to seven members, beside a chairman and vice or deputy chairman. The maximum of seven was increased to eleven in 1976.⁸ Some members were selected for business or technical expertise, and others were included from local authorities covered by the designated areas. The Minister made the appointments. In 1958 general managers were reminded that members were appointed indefinitely and terms of office could only end through death, resignation, dismissal or by notice of termination by the Minister.⁹ Routinely, appointments ran regardless of changes in the Government, usually for three or four years, but at Stevenage one member served for the corporation's entire 34 years.¹⁰ Members were part-time with many other positions and interests. They received a small salary and could not sit in the House of Commons whilst serving.¹¹

There were few or no board committees. Members met once or twice per month to decide policy or ratify decisions, and were advised on these matters by the senior permanent staff. Most staff in a corporation or CNT/EP rarely interacted with board members.¹² This did not preclude members from taking an interest in their role, and some became closely associated with towns, particularly the chairmen. For example, MKDC's first Chairman, Lord Campbell of Eskan, gained the freedom of Milton Keynes, and a school and city centre park were named in his honour.¹³

The permanent staff who undertook daily activities in corporations were 'public servants'.¹⁴ The board appointed senior staff, who then appointed more junior staff, or consultants. The process of establishing a corporation took some months. Staffing levels varied, growing considerably with development, and reducing as assets were disposed of and wind-up implemented. With housing transfers from 1976, it was common practice to transfer appropriate staff to employment with the new housing authorities.

Corporations had a finite role, but, as the earliest towns matured, the Government established CNT to enable it to close corporations whilst retaining direction of remaining development. The

⁷ Sir Ernest A Gowers (1880-1966) Chairman, Harlow Development Corporation (1947-50). *Who Was Who*, 1961-1970, pp443-444; Gibberd, Hyde Harvey and White, pp11-12.

⁸ *New Towns (Amendment) Act 1976*, section 15.

⁹ Hemel Hempstead Development Corporation file: I/3, "Historical. Designation", 1947-1962, CNT/HH Box 210, MISC71, Hertfordshire Record Office.

¹⁰ Philip T Ireton served at Stevenage, 1946-1980. *New Town Development Corporations, Reports*.

¹¹ Schaffer, pp53-59.

¹² Author's observation as an employee from 1988.

¹³ John M (Jock) Campbell (1912-1994) Baron Campbell of Eskan (1966), Chairman of Milton Keynes Development Corporation (1967-83), first Freeman of Milton Keynes (1982). *Who Was Who*, 1991-1995, p83.

¹⁴ Not 'civil servants' as they were employees, not of departments of state, but of government agencies operating their own rules, and terms and conditions of service.

Crawley and Hemel Hempstead corporations closed in 1962, with Hatfield and Welwyn Garden City following in 1966. However, there was no particular drive to remove other corporations, until pressure to reduce public spending in the late 1970's led to reduced expenditure on new towns in favour of inner city regeneration via the Inner Areas Act, 1978. Corby, Stevenage and Harlow corporations wound up in 1980, followed by Bracknell in 1982. Two sets of corporations were merged as part of disengagement. Runcorn Development Corporation closed in 1981, and its functions transferred to Warrington Development Corporation, renamed as Warrington and Runcorn Development Corporation. Peterlee Development Corporation closed in 1985 and its functions transferred to Aycliffe, which became Aycliffe and Peterlee Development Corporation. In 1985 Northampton, Redditch, Skelmersdale and Central Lancashire transferred to CNT, and Basildon in 1986. Aycliffe and Peterlee, Washington, and Peterborough closed in 1988. Warrington and Runcorn followed in 1989, Telford in 1991 and Milton Keynes in 1992. A number of these corporations faced uncertainty in their final years as target wind-up dates changed. In Wales, the Mid Wales Development Corporation at Newtown closed in 1977 and its assets passed to the new Development Board for Rural Wales, but Cwmbran passed to CNT in 1988.¹⁵ The Scottish corporations did not survive much longer, with their closure dates announced in 1989, and the last closing in 1996. The Scottish programme ended more conclusively as CNT did not operate there.¹⁶

3.2 THE COMMISSION FOR THE NEW TOWNS¹⁷

Purpose

CNT was established as a statutory corporation, on 1 October 1961 under the New Towns Act, 1959, to manage the assets of English and Welsh new town development corporations after their dissolution. Its remit from 1961-85 was to acquire, hold, manage and turn to account land in or near a new town (and rights and interests therein); to make contributions towards the cost of providing amenities for a town, or of providing water supplies, sewerage or sewerage disposal; to promote or assist by any means, particularly towards costs of purchasing land or building works, the setting up or extension of businesses in a town; to dispose of any property as it thought fit. From 1985, CNT's remit changed to concentration on disposal of its property when expedient,

¹⁵ The Development Board for Rural Wales was abolished in 1999 following merger with the Welsh Development Agency in 1998. See website: Archives Network Wales, <http://www.archivesnetworkwales.info> (accessed 2005).

¹⁶ James T. Cameron, *East Kilbride: Scotland's First New Town – A benchmark of urban regeneration*, East Kilbride, East Kilbride Development Corporation, 1996, pp114-116; UK *Enterprise and New Towns (Scotland) Act 1990*, Ch 35, London, HMSO, 1990.

¹⁷ Unless otherwise specified, information in this section is taken from: Commission for the New Towns, *Background Briefing*, London, Commission for the New Towns, 1985-1994, *passim*; Commission for the New Towns, *New Towns Act 1959/1965, Reports of the Commission for the New Towns*, London, HMSO, 1962-1984, *passim*; Commission for the New Towns, *Commission for the New Towns Annual Reports and Accounts*, London, Commission for the New Towns, 1985-1999, *passim*; Commission for the New Towns, *CNT News, Commission for the New Towns Staff Journal*, London, Commission for the New Towns, 1991-1998, *passim*; Author's Knowledge.

and, “until disposal, the maintenance and enhancement of the value of the land held and the return obtained from it.” From the outset, CNT had regard to “the convenience and welfare of persons residing, working or carrying on business” in new towns¹⁸

CNT reported to the MHLG/DoE, like English corporations. It was led by a board, whose numbers increased from an initial six, up to ten, as further corporations transferred. The town locations from which CNT operated varied over four decades, but its corporate headquarters from 1961 to 1998 was in Glen House, Stag Place, Victoria, London. CNT had full powers to manage and maintain its property, acquire land by agreement, and grant leases for periods up to 99 years. It could, with ministerial approval, carry out residential, commercial or industrial development, contribute towards the cost of providing amenities and sell the freehold in any land. However, the important points of difference between CNT’s powers and those of a development corporation were that, under the 1959 Act, CNT had no power of compulsory purchase and no privilege in regard to town planning control.¹⁹ This reflected a shift in emphasis from development to management.

CNT’s role was to oversee the final phase of the new town process – the evolution from ‘new’ to ‘normal’. It administered its remaining responsibilities in the towns like a mini-corporation, continuing inherited development programmes, encouraging natural growth, and transferring completed industrial, commercial, residential and community assets out of state ownership; returning in the process the public investment in the new towns project.

Resentment of corporations sometimes transferred to CNT, when councils realised that wind-up did not mean that they were masters in their own areas but that one quango had replaced another. Apparently this was not so in Corby, where CNT “deliberately and fully concurred” with the district council’s view of itself as the dominant body.²⁰ However, in 1998 Milton Keynes Council, a newly-created unitary authority, challenged CNT’s right to grant planning permission in the city centre, claiming power as the local authority to control developments on land that had already been partially developed. However, the High Court in London ruled that CNT was the legal planning authority under the New Towns Acts.²¹ Critics of quangos suggested that CNT, as a national body, had a less localised focus than town-based corporations. However, the town or regional offices of CNT remained in the localities, often in the premises of the former corporations. Also, they were staffed predominantly by ex-corporation employees who transferred to CNT, providing continuity and often retaining ‘town’ loyalties.

¹⁸ For CNT’s functions and powers see: *New Towns Act, 1959*, superseded by *New Towns Act, 1965*, (see particularly sections 35-37), superseded by *New Towns Act, 1981*, (see particularly sections 35-37), and amended by *New Towns and Urban Development Corporations Act, 1985*, (see particularly sections 1-2).

¹⁹ See Section 3.1, Property and Development, for discussion of new town planning powers.

²⁰ Northamptonshire RO, “Corby Catalogue”, vol 1, Box No 219, np.

²¹ *Milton Keynes On Sunday*, newscutting, 6 December 1998, np.

CNT acted upon the wishes of respective governments. For most of the first twenty years this meant managing inherited assets. From 1978 it gradually transferred responsibility for managing housing stocks and tenants to local authorities and housing associations, and from 1980 it became primarily a realisation agency. By March 1984 over £265 million worth of property had been sold – the majority to tenants – and in four towns all community related assets had been transferred. CNT holdings however increased as more towns transferred and their value stood at over £1 billion after transfer of Redditch, Northampton and Central Lancashire in 1985. From 1992 with the receipt of a major portfolio of prime commercial development land in Telford and Milton Keynes, CNT had the added task of marketing this to the international investment community.

Where a corporation had not transferred its housing or community related assets prior to wind-up, these passed with remaining commercial and industrial assets and undeveloped land, to CNT. Housing transfers were completed by the mid-1990s, and community assets continued to be disposed of to local authorities or other suitable bodies. In some cases houses could not be transferred because they formed integral parts of commercial developments. In these cases, to comply with ‘Right To Buy’ under the Housing Act, 1980, the tenants were offered 125 year leases.²² Leasebacks on these properties were reserved out of freehold sales of commercial blocks to enable the occupiers to have the right to buy if they wished in the future, and were assigned to local authorities in CRA packages or to housing associations. Where individual sales to tenants were not feasible, due to shared services or access, or where such sales would leave unsaleable residual interests, sales were made to consortia of tenants.²³

CNT operated in the open market place in order to dispose of assets to private companies, developers and investors. It had to take account of the market’s ability to cope with particular types of sales and volumes, and avoid dominant landlords by ensuring ownership was spread widely. Wherever possible existing tenants were given first opportunity to buy, before a property was marketed. Changing market conditions, and disposal of prime sites, necessitated negotiations to achieve annual targets and to avoid fragmentary disposals that hampered the sale of the remainder of an asset. By 1992 CNT had raised nearly £2 billion from sales, and was generating £50 million per annum in gross rental income. In 1994 CNT owned 19,800 acres of land and 8.8 million square feet of industrial and commercial premises, with a value of around £1.3 billion. In 1996 this had reduced to 11,000 acres of development land and 3 million square feet of office buildings and factories.

From 1988 CNT produced a corporate plan to meet DoE objectives. Having acquired all allocated towns, that for 1992 set a six year strategy towards handing the “rump of its responsibilities to some form of successor body” in 1998. It looked as though “there will be a

²² UK *Housing Act, 1980, Ch 51*, London, HMSO, 1980.

continued need for the Commission beyond the year 2000” although “the workload will have changed and require much lower staffing levels than at present.”²⁴

Organisation and Staffing Structure

1961-1978

CNT’s early approach to organisation was a small headquarters in London to maintain general control of policy, finance and capital investment and to receive regular progress reports from the town offices, known as Executives. In these offices daily management was delegated to chief executive officers styled as Managers, although the corporate heads of discipline directed the local heads on professional matters.²⁵

Management recruitment for CNT began in September 1961. At its first meeting on 2 October, the General Manager of Crawley Development Corporation was confirmed as Finance Officer.²⁶ The post of Secretary (equivalent to a corporation’s general manager) proved more difficult to fill, and the Ministry seconded a civil servant as Acting Secretary until April 1962, when the County Planning Officer of Middlesex took up the post.²⁷

Work was arranged under four main headings of Finance, Estates, Legal and Administration. A senior management structure was in place for the first receipt of assets in April 1962, with six chief officers under the Secretary. Based at headquarters were the Chief Legal Officer, Chief Administrative Officer, Chief Estates Officer, and the Finance Officer. In the two towns were the Manager, Crawley, and the General Manager, Hemel Hempstead. Staffing stood at 625, with most town staff transferred from Crawley and Hemel corporations. A further Manager was added for Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield when those two corporations transferred in 1966. The officers were convened regularly by the Secretary in the Commission’s Executive Committee (CEC) to determine policy and strategic issues. Following the resignation of the Chief Estates Officer in 1964, estate management was left to town officers. Posts of Chief Architect and Chief Engineer were created in 1964, the former based at the appointee’s existing location in Crawley. However, the structure of 1962 largely remained unaltered until 1978 when CNT had to transfer housing stock. This long period of stability contrasted with the rapid changes and reorganisations that marked the years thereafter.

²³ Commission for the New Towns, *New Towns 1984 Summary*, London, Commission for the New Towns, 1984, np.

²⁴ CNT Records file: 30/1/14, “Records - General and Policy - Corporate Plan”, 1992-1998, EP Records Centre.

²⁵ CNT Commission Paper 13/62, 12 February 1962, in CNT Glen House file: CNT Board Minutes and Papers 1962 Pages 1-213, [bound volume], EP Records Centre.

²⁶ Edward E H Cage (1912-1984) Crawley Development Corporation Senior Finance Officer (1948-49), Chief Finance Officer (1949-58), General Manager (1958-61); CNT Chief Finance and Development Officer, (1961-66); Craigavon Development Commission General Manager (1966-73). *Who Was Who*, 1981-1990, p114.

Organisational philosophy from 1961, until Government policy necessitated change in the 1980s, was delegation to local level. The New Towns Act, 1959, required CNT to appoint a local housing management committee in each of its towns. The Act enabled CNT to delegate other functions, and so the responsibilities of these committees were extended to deal with the planning and implementation of residential development on land owned by CNT, disposal of land and houses, and management of all CNT dwellings. The committees had power to make contributions to minor amenities. The board did not delegate powers relating to commercial and industrial matters. The Welwyn and Hatfield committees were dissolved in 1974 and replaced by a new committee for both towns to reflect the creation of Welwyn Hatfield District Council in local government re-organisation. The purpose of the Local Committees ended with housing transfer after 1976, and they were formally closed in 1978.²⁸

1978-1982

The Government's decision to transfer housing and associated assets to local authorities caused much uncertainty within CNT – a problem repeatedly faced by staff for the next two decades and beyond.

“With the expected transfer date fast approaching the prolonged discussion and lack of positive information about the exact nature and extent of the Commission's future activities have made the Commission's planning difficult and caused problems for staff, who have been unable to form a clear idea of the security of their jobs or prospects.”²⁹

Whilst the New Towns (Amendment) Act, 1976 left CNT's statutory duties unchanged, its role altered. In 1978, nearly 29,000 dwellings in Crawley, Hatfield, Hemel Hempstead and Welwyn Garden City transferred to local authorities, together with 400 shops, public houses, petrol filling stations, offices and 90 hectares of recreational land. Transfer of housing staff to councils, and redundancies, reduced CNT staff from 874 to 237. The town offices were down-sized and some functions centralised. Crawley continued to have a Manager, but the Managers at Welwyn Hatfield and Hemel Hempstead retired, with local management assumed by the estates managers. A new chairman and chief executive ruled for the next four years.³⁰ A programme for transferring eight corporations was announced, securing CNT's foreseeable future, and the post of Chief Estates Officer was resurrected in 1979 in anticipation of the transfers of Corby, Harlow and Stevenage.

From 1979 corporations and CNT were directed to pursue large-scale sales of assets in line with the new Government's policy of reducing public expenditure and limiting public sector

²⁷ John Cannon filled the post until the appointment of Bernard J Collins (1909-1989) as Secretary (1962-64). For Collins see *Who Was Who*, 1981-1990, p155.

²⁸ CNT *Annual Reports*, 1974-1975 p2; 1978-1979, p3.

²⁹ CNT, *Annual Report*, 1975-1976, p3.

³⁰ Colin Macpherson (1927-1988) CNT Chairman (1978-82). *Who Was Who*, 1981-1990, p488;

involvement. It was uncertain whether CNT would inherit further assets after 1980, and whether it would itself close. The sales programme included prime assets and many secondary properties. Others, which for various reasons had a restricted market or limited investment attraction, were brought, through estate management or passage of time, to a more favourable position for disposal. Development or redevelopment work could still be substantial, but the emphasis was on CNT facilitating projects rather than undertaking them directly. Town management was also a lower priority.

This revised remit reversed CNT's organisational emphasis from a small central resource supporting strong local management teams. Instead, a strong central team undertook management and development, including liaison with local authorities, with estate management handling the realisation programme, and staff visiting towns as necessary. From 1980 existing local offices were prepared for closure. However, a full CNT office under a manager was opened at Corby in 1980 because of CNT's task to counteract the effects of closure of the manufacturing plant by the town's principal employer, British Steel Corporation. Small, short-life, offices were opened at Harlow and Stevenage under principal officers, increasing the number of offices from four to seven. This first expansion since 1966 was transitory as centralisation proceeded, and by 1983 the offices at Crawley, Harlow, Hemel, Stevenage and Welwyn had closed, reducing CNT staffing from 387 to 295. Staff with direct knowledge of CNT's first twenty years, and of corporations which had transferred in the 1960s, were diminishing in number. The background of many senior staff at headquarters for the next decade was that of Harlow. Due to the transfer of Bracknell in 1982, a small task-and-finish office was retained there until early 1983. Thereafter, the only local office was Corby, and its functions were gradually centralised from 1984. By March 1984 it was calculated that £1 million had been saved in CNT administration costs.³¹

1982-1992

The centralised CNT had a new chairman and chief executive.³² Several chief officers also retired or were made redundant, and the management structure changed from a flat-topped one, of chief officers and local managers, to a twin directorate. The Director of Finance, Administration and Legal Services (DFALS) had heads of service under him representing Finance, Management Services, and Legal. The Director of Estates and Technical Services (DETS) had service heads for Estates Management, Engineering Services, and Planning and Architectural Services. In 1983 a Director of Promotion was appointed for marketing purposes, in anticipation of the transfer of four development corporations in 1985 (Central Lancashire, Northampton, Redditch and Skelmersdale). The succession of corporations transferring to CNT

Robin M Clarke (1917-2002) Crawley Development Corporation employee (1948-62), Acting Chief Executive (1961-62), CNT Manager Crawley (1962-78), CNT Chief Executive (1978-82). *Who Was Who*, 2001-2005, p103.

³¹ CNT, *1984 Summary*, np.

in 1985-92 resulted in local offices opening where necessary, under Executive Officers whose role was estate management, office administration, and local promotion. The influence in town offices of corporate technical directors was marked. The new holdings, and active disposal, led CNT to open a London Promotion Bureau to market development and job creation in the towns nationally and internationally.³³ A non-departmental post of Executive Officer (HQ) was created to provide policy and co-ordination assistance to the Chief Executive.

Previously CNT had few management meetings, other than the Commission's Executive Committee (CEC). An Executive Officers Committee, established in 1986 under the Chief Executive and attended by the Director of Promotion, dealt with marketing and public relations. From 1988, regular Heads of Discipline (HODS) meetings were held under the Chief Executive and also attended by the directors and deputy directors, and the Housing Manager, Basildon, (later re-designated as Head of Housing Services). HODS meetings dealt with strategic management, and were usually held the day after board meetings.

A staff handbook of rules and conditions of service existed from 1983, and by 1984 a Joint Liaison Committee of employer and staff-side representatives had been formed to deal with staff issues for the increased and widespread workforce. CNT inherited outline planning permission powers in Central Lancashire and Basildon, and in Basildon became a major landlord. Like Corby before it, Basildon posed unique issues. The corporation was closed at short notice, which, combined with the size of remaining tasks, meant that the staffing establishment and management structure transferred to CNT in entirety. In 1987 the number of CNT staff reached its zenith, at 1,157, and Basildon accounted for half of this. CNT practices were resisted in what was in effect a continuing corporation, so CNT restructured the estates management department and centralised some work. Other departments were gradually re-organised. The frequently delayed transfer of Basildon rental housing to the local authority and housing associations was not completed until 1993. Housing stock and tenants were also inherited at Warrington in 1989 and transferred in 1993. Assets sales increased yearly, and from 1987 the emphasis on disengagement was increased via CRA packages which were mostly due for completion by 1993.

By the end of the 1980s CNT again adapted organisation and staffing commensurate with its changing estate. Northampton assets reduced to the extent that the local office closed in 1988, and remaining estate management passed to Redditch Office.³⁴ It was expected that by 1993 CNT would have realised the bulk of its labour-intensive built estate in its existing towns and adopted huge but less labour-intensive landholdings and development-facilitating activities in Telford and Milton Keynes. It was assumed that housing in Basildon and Warrington would

³² Sir Neil S Shields (1919-2002) CNT Chairman (1982-95). *Who Was Who*, 2001-2005, pp476-477; David M Woodhall (born 1934) CNT Chief Executive (1982-92). *Who's Who*, 2006, p2467.

³³ CNT, *Review 1985*, np.

³⁴ CNT Records file: 30/4/12, "Records – Towns – Northampton", 1992-1998, EP Records Centre.

have transferred. Regionalisation was therefore favoured, so CNT closed Central Lancashire, Corby, Peterborough, Redditch, Skelmersdale and Washington offices during 1991-92. Management of the northern estate was combined in a regional office in Warrington. Responsibility for Northampton, Peterborough and Corby transferred to Glen House. Redditch work was undertaken by a new office at Telford from 1991, and Milton Keynes Office opened in 1992.

1992-1994

April 1992 saw the retirement or redundancy of the chief executive and the five senior postholders. Once again re-organisation was marked by a new chief executive – the former Deputy General Manager of MKDC.³⁵ The twin directorate structure was replaced by a ‘flat-top’ matrix of a general manager with heads of specific services and their support staff in headquarters, and executive officers and support staff in the towns.³⁶ Glen House staff were split between Headquarters, and a South Office managing London ring-towns, Corby, Northampton and Peterborough. The new Executive Management Group (EMG) met monthly to develop policy for board approval, and EMG members attended board meetings.

Regional staff had both local line-management and a professional and technical reporting line to corporate Heads of Service for Finance, Estates Management, Planning and Architecture, Engineering, Legal, Building Services, Personnel and Management Services, Housing (based at Basildon), and Corporate Services. The latter was a new discipline to encompass secretariat, marketing, community related assets work, records management, corporate planning, and information technology. Corporate staff reported only to the relevant Head of Service. For example, the Planning and Architectural Services team was split into a Corporate Team providing a support service to planners at Glen House and local offices, and a South and East Midlands Team working on detailed planning issues for the London ring towns and Corby, Northampton and Peterborough. The balance of power between centre and towns was more equal. In early 1993, chief officers’ titles changed – General Manager to Chief Executive, and Heads of Service and Executive Officers to Directors.

1994-1998

This matrix management ended after only two years with a decided swing to regional autonomy in 1994. CNT was given a closure date, so it split into two agencies – CNT Land and CNT 1998. This distinguished between land sales and those disengagement and support tasks that would disappear in 1998, aiming to reduce staffing for closure. Those corporate directors whose functions could be dealt with regionally were made redundant. This included Legal, Estates Management, Planning and Architectural Services, Engineering, and Building Services. The

³⁵ N John Walker (born 1948) CNT General Manager/Chief Executive (1992-99). *Who's Who*, 2006, p2333.

³⁶ CNT Records file: 30/3/1/2, “Records – Departmental – Corporate – Establishment (All Regions)”, 1992-1998, EP Records Centre.

Director of Housing remained until transfer tasks were completed at Basildon in 1996. A corporate Marketing directorate was established at Milton Keynes. Corby and Northampton work transferred from South Office to Milton Keynes Office, which was renamed Central Office.³⁷ The changes, including closure of Basildon Office, removed 257 posts from the establishment, which had stood at 842 in 1993. Staffing was continually reduced in 1994-98.

All directors served in the management teams for both agencies, except the Director of Finance who was in 1998 alone, and the Director, Marketing who was in Land alone, and they acted as deputy chief executives for their respective agencies. The Director of Personnel and Management Services was placed outside of this structure, providing common services to all. Most staff reported to only one director, and were placed in either agency or in the three corporate departments at Headquarters – namely those of the Chief Executive, Finance, and Personnel and Management Services. It was not a clear division, because financial and administrative services were also provided by 1998 Agency staff to staff of both agencies in regional offices. This structure existed on paper until 1998, and at board level did take shape with a main board and two sub-boards for each agency. Initially it captured attention, and it was rumoured that CNT Land would develop into an independent disposal body beyond 1998, whilst the bulk of staff in CNT 1998 would leave. Within weeks agency labels seemed insignificant, and most staff continued to operate as before.³⁸

It was announced in 1996 that from April 1998 CNT would continue disengagement from new towns, and additionally receive residual assets and liabilities from remaining urban development corporations (UDCs) and housing action trusts (HATs). CNT staffing was 314 in 1997-98, but the DoE set the establishment for the on-going body at no more than 100.³⁹ For the 1998 re-organisation staff had to apply for posts on the new structure, and sign new contracts. There was not the 'slotting in' that had occurred for most staff in the 1993 re-organisation. A new provision allowed some staff to terminate their service after two or three years, in order to retain staff who would otherwise have jeopardised their pension arrangements, or London staff who were unsure of the commitment of commuting to the new Head Office at Milton Keynes. This process resulted in many redundancies and an imbalance between resources and workload. Practicalities, and a change of attitude with a new Government in 1997, meant that the establishment surged above 100 in 1998-99.⁴⁰

1998-1999

Re-organisation ended the dual agency. Glen House closed. Core functions were centralised from regional offices into corporate departments. Regional directors were abolished and other directors retired or changed function. Corporate staff were mostly based at Milton Keynes, in the

³⁷ CNT Records: 30/3/1/2.

³⁸ Author's Knowledge.

³⁹ CNT Records: 30/1/24.

⁴⁰ Author's Knowledge.

Chief Executive's Office, Finance and Administration, and Business Development directorates, with some located in town offices to provide corporate services. Remaining staff were in town-based directorates providing estates, planning, engineering and related functions. The UDC work included maintaining a residual office at London Docklands and opening a Middlesbrough Office. This structure survived for only one year due to the merger with the Urban Regeneration Agency (URA).

By 1998 the Government's intention to create regional development agencies (RDAs) and merge URA's corporate element with CNT in 2000 was being discussed at executive level in CNT.⁴¹ It emerged that the merger was to be brought forward to 1999. It was predicted within CNT that CNT would take primacy on the basis of proven skills and greater experience than URA, and that CNT's superiority was recognised by the DETR, although a new name would probably have to be found for a new organisation. In practice, a new chairman for both bodies was appointed, and in January 1999 the chief executive post for the combined organisation went to URA's Managing Director (Operations). Over ensuing months CNT staff openly described events as a 'take-over', with imposition of URA systems and practices, and installation of URA directors in all top posts.⁴² Whilst CNT continued as a legal entity, in practice it ceased to exist as a recognisable body.

3.3 THE NEW TOWNS ASSOCIATION⁴³

Although UK corporations and CNT reported separately to their respective Secretaries of State, their similarities were recognised. The chairmen and officers met in conferences and committees to share experiences and ideas, to study problems and consider solutions. This was formalised from 1970 in a New Towns Association (NTA), with a permanent secretariat to service the New Towns Chairmen's Conference, the New Towns General Managers' Committee, and other committees for chief officers. The new towns chairmen took it in turns to act as chairman of the Conference and Association.

NTA kept audited accounts, but as it was neither a corporate body nor a registered company it was not required to publish an annual report. It did not have statutory power to own property, and was not subject to ministerial direction. The corporations and CNT funded NTA via an administrative levy on themselves. This paid for a small secretariat in London, which co-

⁴¹ CNT Records file: 30/3/1/8, "Records – Departmental – Corporate – Secretariat", 1992-1998, EP Records Centre.

⁴² Author's Knowledge.

⁴³ Unless otherwise specified, information on the NTA is taken from the following sources: CNT Records file: 30/1/9, "Records – General and Policy – New Towns Association", 1992-1998, EP Records Centre (including copies of NTA job advertisements in *The Times*, 13 May 1970 and 31 December 1973); CNT, *Annual Report*, 1970-1971, p3; INTA, *New Towns of Britain*, p46; Kidd, *New Towns*, pp76-77; TCPA, *Special Issue*, 1977, p104.

ordinated contact and exchange of information between new town bodies, and between them and external organisations.

Through NTA, member bodies could act in harmony and respond jointly to collective new town issues. NTA dealt with the media and general public, provided a specialised information service locating and collating expertise from new town bodies, and maintained a library. It published a monthly bulletin carrying brief notices of parliamentary and other official actions affecting new towns, and giving progress reports on individual towns.⁴⁴

NTA's office was in Glen House alongside CNT until 1982 when it moved to nearby Metro House. In 1985, as many corporations had closed, or were winding-up, the secretariat closed, and NTA petered out. The Metro House office was taken over by CNT's promotional and marketing bureau. The Head of Secretariat remained on a part-time consultancy basis for twelve months. Some records remained with him and others went to CNT, but the bulk were held at Washington Development Corporation and then transferred to MKDC as the last corporation to hold the chairmanship.⁴⁵

An International New Towns Association (INTA) was formed in 1976, following an International New Towns Congress, to act as a non-profit, non-political world association for exchange of information among all groups and individuals concerned with planning and development of new and renewing communities.⁴⁶ NTA encouraged corporations to join INTA, and when INTA lacked a Secretary-General in 1980-81, NTA "acted as caretaker of the files, archives and other documents".⁴⁷ However, interest in INTA from some corporations was lukewarm. Aycliffe and Peterlee's Managing Director (and a former NTA Secretary) described their interest as "negligible".⁴⁸

3.4 OTHER NEW TOWN BODIES

Under the New Towns (Amendment) Act, 1976, section 14(1), a New Towns Staff Commission (formed from a New Towns Staff Advisory Committee) was appointed to consider and report to the Secretaries of State for the Environment and Wales on arrangements to safeguard the interests

⁴⁴ New Towns Association, *New Towns Bulletin*, London, New Towns Association, April 1972-May 1985, *passim*.

⁴⁵ The General Manager's department made the first deposit of these in the MKDC Records Centre in February 1988. Consignment 343, EP Records Centre.

⁴⁶ Skelmersdale Development Corporation file: 1/17/01, "International New Towns Association", 1976-1984, NTSk/4/1/64-66, Lancashire Record Office; Kidd, appendix, np.

⁴⁷ CNT Glen House: 7/3.

⁴⁸ Aycliffe and Peterlee Development Corporations Notes of Meeting of Management Team 21 July 1983, p5, in Aycliffe and Peterlee Development Corporations file: "Management Team Meetings Agenda and Notes From: 28.4.83 To: 13.10.83", 1983, NT/AP/1/6/19, Durham Record Office.

of staff affected by transfer schemes. It comprised a chairman, three members, a secretary and assistant secretary. The Commission survived into the 1990s.⁴⁹

The Whitley Council for New Towns Staff operated from 1955 to 1997 as a national negotiating body on salary scales, annual pay-awards, conditions of service, and until the early 1990s as a last stage of appeal for individuals. It comprised new town board members representing Employers, and Staff-Side representatives of new town staff.⁵⁰

3.5 MERGER WITH THE URBAN REGENERATION BODIES

Land and property-based economic regeneration was high on Government agendas through the 1980s and 1990s.⁵¹ Not only did this divert attention from the New Town programme, but also from 1998 the Government involved CNT in regeneration as the residuary body for urban development corporations and housing action trusts. In 1999 the new towns and regeneration programmes were merged into English Partnerships (EP).

By the 1990s the largest instruments of regeneration policy were the DoE's Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) and two housing budgets (Housing Corporation and Housing Investment Programme). The SRB was formed in 1994 by rationalising twenty regeneration programmes from five ministries, and it was disbursed through regional government offices (GOs), with specific allocations to UDCs, HATs, and URA. As pre-1994 commitments ended, an increasing proportion of the budget was allocated through the SRB Challenge Fund which involved competitive bidding for funds by partnerships of local authorities, technology and enterprise councils (TECs), voluntary and community groups. This approach had been piloted by the City Challenge programme of 1991 and 1992 which resulted in thirty-one City Challenge Partnerships each receiving £37.5 million over five years for regeneration projects.⁵² The last payments from City Challenge were made in 1998.

Urban Development Corporations (UDCs)⁵³

Urban riots in 1981 gave impetus for a central government solution to problems of inner city decay that local authorities were seen not to be meeting. The USA's Boston Redevelopment

⁴⁹ Department of the Environment, *The First Report of the New Towns Staff Commission (1976-1978)*, London, HMSO, 1978; Author's Knowledge.

⁵⁰ Ruffman, chapter 4, p1.

⁵¹ Central Office of Information, *Aspects of Britain: Urban Regeneration*, London, HMSO, 1995.

⁵² Central Office of Information, *Aspects of Britain: Urban Regeneration*, pp29-32.

⁵³ Unless otherwise specified, information in this section is drawn from: Central Office of Information, *Aspects of Britain*, pp32-40; Department of the Environment, "The Urban Development Corporations of England and Wales – Building Futures", unpublished report, nd [1989]; National Audit Office, *The Achievements of the Second and Third Generation Urban Development Corporations*, Report by the Comptroller and Auditor General, London, HMSO, 1993; National Audit Office, *Department of the Environment: Urban Development Corporations*, Report by the Comptroller and Auditor General, London, HMSO, 1988; annual reports for UDCs inherited by CNT (see Bibliography); Author's Knowledge.

Authority exemplified the concept of a single urban regeneration authority with the ability to make decisions quickly and to work in partnership with the private sector. The new town development corporations provided the model mechanism for the British context. Thirteen urban development corporations were established in England and Wales to manage designated urban development areas (UDAs), under powers contained in the Local Government, Planning and Land Act, 1980. They formed an important element of the “Action for Cities” initiative through which several ministries contributed towards urban regeneration.⁵⁴ The Labour Party opposed removal of powers from elected local authorities.

The first and largest-scale UDCs, Merseyside and London Docklands, were established in March and July 1981 respectively. The second generation, created with an expected life-span of ten years, were at Trafford Park (February 1987), Black Country, Teesside, and Tyne and Wear (May 1987). The third generation, created on a smaller-scale and with an envisaged life-span of five to seven years, were Central Manchester, Leeds, and Sheffield in 1988, and Bristol in 1989. Birmingham Heartlands was created in 1992 to last five years and take over from a development agency run jointly by the city council and the private sector. The final UDC was established at Plymouth in 1993. The twelve English bodies reported to the DoE/DETR. The only Welsh UDC, Cardiff Bay, formed in 1987, reported to the Welsh Office. In 1999 it was the last UDC to close, and its residual assets passed to the Welsh Development Agency.⁵⁵

UDCs had powers to acquire, compulsorily purchase, hold, manage, reclaim and dispose of land and property, carry out building and other operations, ensure the provision of infrastructure and services, provide social and community facilities, give financial assistance to private sector development, and carry on any other activities necessary to their purpose. They were the appointed development control authorities for their areas. They were funded by DoE grants, and receipts from land sales. The GOs had important responsibilities for appraising and approving UDC projects.

The size and populations of UDC areas varied, as did the nature and scale of decay. For example, Black Country Development Corporation (BCDC) covered ten square miles in an historic industrial region, crossing the metropolitan boroughs of Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton. Tyne and Wear Development Corporation (TWDC) had predominantly narrow strips of land along the industrial waterfronts of the two rivers in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, North and South Tyneside, and Sunderland. Sheffield was a response to the decline of steel-making. Bristol,

⁵⁴ Department of the Environment and Department of Employment, *Action For Cities: Building on Initiative*, London, Central Office of Information, 1987.

⁵⁵ The UDC concept was revived for the Government’s Sustainable Communities Plan of 2003, using the 1980 legislation to create Thurrock (2003), London Thames Gateway, and West Northamptonshire (2004). See websites: English Partnerships, <http://www.englishpartnerships.co.uk> (accessed 2005); London Thames Gateway Development Corporation, <http://www.ltgdgc.org.uk>, (accessed 2005); Thurrock Thames Gateway Development Corporation, <http://www.thurrocktgdc.org.uk> (accessed 2005).

Central Manchester and Leeds faced city centre problems. Plymouth was to regenerate former naval dockyards. London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC) aimed to regenerate eight square miles of docklands, in place of an earlier local government initiative, and accounted for most of the output of the combined UDCs.⁵⁶

However, all had common objectives to bring land and buildings into effective use; encourage existing and new industry and commerce; create attractive environments; make housing and social facilities available to encourage people to live and work in the designated areas. As with new towns, the Environment Secretary appointed the chairmen, deputy chairmen and between five and eleven board members, selecting a mix of private sector and local authority representatives. The boards appointed the chief executives, subject to the Secretary of State's approval, and senior directors. Significant use was made of consultants, keeping staffing levels well under 100 in most corporations.

Wind-up arrangements were considered from November 1989, and by 1993 indicative dates were in place for all corporations and firm dates for three. Bristol and Leeds closed in December 1994 and March 1995 respectively. Sheffield, and Central Manchester (which would have survived longest if Manchester's bid to host the 2000 Olympic Games had been successful), closed in 1997.⁵⁷ Issues arising from these closures, when residual assets and liabilities passed to the DoE, led to remaining UDCs transferring to CNT.⁵⁸ The precedent was set for CNT to receive housing action trust assets.

Housing Action Trusts (HATs)⁵⁹

Another urban regeneration vehicle of the Conservative Government of 1979-97 were housing action trusts, established under the Housing Act, 1988, to manage and regenerate some of the worst municipal housing estates.⁶⁰ Again, this made them unpopular with the Labour Party which preferred elected local authority management for rental housing. However, councils were involved, as the Secretary of State appointed an agreed number of council nominees to HAT

⁵⁶ The Government approved formation of a Docklands Joint Committee (DJC) in 1974 by the GLC and five London boroughs to plan re-development. The Government and DJC formed a Partnership Committee from 1978. Docklands Consultative Committee, "Urban Development Corporations, Six Years In London's Docklands", unpublished report, 1988; Docklands Joint Committee, *London Docklands: The Years of Growth, Operational Programme 1979-83*, London, Docklands Joint Committee, 1979; London Docklands Development Corporation, "History of The London Docklands Area", unpublished report, nd [c1981]; Eric Sorensen, "London Docklands and Urban Development Corporations", *Parliamentary Affairs, A Journal of Comparative Politics*, vol 48, no 2, April 1995, pp 242-253.

⁵⁷ CNT Records: 30/1/24.

⁵⁸ SI 1998 No 85 Urban Development, The Urban Development Corporations in England (Transfer of Property, Rights and Liabilities) (Commission for the New Towns) Order 1998, DOE 1207, London, HMSO, 1998.

⁵⁹ Unless otherwise specified, information in this section is drawn from: Central Office of Information, *Urban Regeneration*, pp46-47; Department of the Environment, "Housing Action Trusts", background briefing note RD1/DoE June 1996; CNT Records file: 30/1/22, "Records – General and Policy – Housing Action Trusts", 1992-1998, EP Records Centre.

boards. Board members were appointed for, renewable, three year terms. Six HATs were created – the first two in 1991, a second batch in 1993, and the last in 1994. It was envisaged that each HAT would complete its task in eight to ten years. By 1996 no more were planned. Similar regeneration schemes were eligible for funding from the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB), and schemes transferring housing to new social landlords were supported from the Estates Renewal Challenge Fund.

The HATs' four statutory objectives were to redevelop or refurbish housing stock; to ensure effective management and use of the stock; to encourage diversity of ownership and tenure; to improve the physical, social, and environmental conditions of their areas. They were publicly funded via grant-in-aid (£300million to the end of 1995/96). From 1996, on the basis of each HAT's plans, the Government set targets for each HAT's lifetime and the public element of its lifetime costs, to aid proper planning of activities and of the whole HAT programme. The HATs were then expected to achieve their statutory objectives within these lifetimes and costs, supplementing public investment with other income and private finance.

As support of tenants was considered vital to a HAT's success, they had to vote in favour before one could be established.⁶¹ Also, up to four of the twelve or so board members appointed by the Secretary of State for the Environment were representatives elected by tenants. Trusts consulted and worked with tenants to determine policies, and encouraged their active participation in running of estates. Tenants also benefited from frozen rents from establishment of a HAT until they were re-housed or the property refurbished. To encourage long-term sustainability of environmental improvements undertaken, HATs promoted social and economic initiatives for residents such as employment training. North Hull and Waltham Forest were awarded Chartermarks for the quality of their services.

Like new towns and UDCs, HATS devised master plans to explain and programme their developments, and had powers of compulsory purchase if necessary to acquire additional land or premises to facilitate regeneration of estates. Each HAT was required to have an exit strategy and to dispose of its housing stock and as many as possible of any other liabilities and assets before closure. The timing and method of housing disposal was to be done in consultation with tenants. Secure tenants retained a right to revert to local authority tenure, but other options included housing associations or new types of social landlord, home ownership through the Right to Buy and Tenants Initiative Schemes. For long-term sustainability, the development of community based housing associations (CBHAs), registered with the Housing Corporation, was encouraged. It was hoped that through these, tenant involvement in estate management would continue.

⁶⁰ UK *Housing Act 1988*, Ch 50, London, HMSO, 1988.

⁶¹ Proposed HATs for Sunderland and Southwark failed to pass ballots in 1990. John Chumrow, "Housing Action Trusts: A Possible Role Model?", *Parliamentary Affairs, A Journal of Comparative Politics*, vol 48, no 2, April 1995, pp 254-270.

North Hull was the first HAT to be established (1991), and the first to close, in 1999. It refurbished nearly all its 2,000 houses, and responsibilities passed to Kingston-upon-Hull City Council and housing associations. The task at Waltham Forest (1991) was to replace 2,400 high-rise dwellings in Leytonstone, London, with more traditional houses. Tenants moved into the first 300 in 1996. The Trust also set up a community based housing association as a subsidiary of the Peabody Trust to manage its housing and provide new homes under a Private Finance Initiative (PFI) scheme. Waltham was the second HAT to close (2002). Two staff remained on delayed redundancy with EP for twelve months, including the Archivist.

Liverpool HAT (1993), the first of the second wave, had a major programme of statutory and 'catch-up' repairs in 5,300 flats in 67 tower blocks spread across the city, whereas other HATs covered unified estates. Castle Vale estate, Birmingham, was given a HAT in July 1993. Tasks included demolition of eight tower blocks. Tower Hamlets HAT (1993) was to redevelop 1,700 flats in Bow, London. In the third stage, in 1994, the final HAT created was for 1,700 dwellings on the Stonebridge estate in Brent, London. All HATs remaining in 2002 were expected to close in 2005. However, in 2003 it was agreed that Tower Hamlets would close in 2004, Castle Vale and Liverpool on schedule in 2005, with Stonebridge extended to 2007. Residual assets and liabilities transferred to EP (CNT).⁶²

The Urban Regeneration Agency (known as English Partnerships)⁶³

The Government's approach to urban renewal widened with the creation of the Urban Regeneration Agency (URA) under the provisions of the Leasehold Reform, Housing and Urban Development Act, 1993.⁶⁴ Fully operational from 1994, this NDPB took over the City Grant Scheme and Derelict Land Grant Scheme (DLG) from the DoE, and the assets and development role of English Estates from the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI). Three existing programmes were thus combined into a single regeneration agency to identify and enable derelict, vacant, contaminated, or under-used land and buildings to be reclaimed and developed for industrial, commercial, residential or leisure purposes. At creation, URA adopted the operating name of "English Partnerships" (EP) from collaborating with public, private and voluntary sectors.⁶⁵

⁶² Author's Knowledge.

⁶³ Unless otherwise specified, information in this section is drawn from: Department of the Environment, "Action For Cities: The Urban Regeneration Agency, A Consultation Paper Issued by the Department of the Environment", July 1992; English Partnerships, *Annual Reports and Financial Statements*, London, English Partnerships, 1994-1998, *passim*; English Partnerships, "Official Launch Pack", London, 10 November 1993; Author's Knowledge.

⁶⁴ UK *Leasehold Reform, Housing and Urban Development Act, 1993*, Ch 28, London, HMSO, 1993.

⁶⁵ To distinguish it from the later English Partnerships the thesis refers to this body as URA.

Funding

URA activities were mainly funded by DoE/DETR grant-in-aid. Additionally, URA generated cash receipts from asset disposals, and attracted private sector funding of projects. URA made great use of the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) initiated by the Government in 1992. URA's Partnership Investment Programme (PIP), launched in 1994, was a range of financial measures to support regeneration and inward investment, including gap funding, joint ventures, loans and guarantees. The Investment Fund pooled the resources of the three inherited regimes to support regeneration activities. The Land Reclamation Programme (LRP) made grants to assist local authorities reclaim derelict land. The Community Investment Fund (CIF), launched in 1995, provided assistance of up to £100,000 for local-level voluntary community capital projects. Both the LRP and CIF transferred to the regional development agencies (RDAs) in 1999. URA inherited a number of, mostly dormant, subsidiary undertakings from English Estates, and entered into its own "public private partnerships" to fund development.

Assets

URA sites were both inherited and purchased. The inherited portfolio primarily came from English Industrial Estates Corporation (operating as "English Estates"), a body that had hoped to inherit the development role of new town development corporations, but was itself replaced.⁶⁶ The English Estates portfolio had been almost halved since 1989 through rapid disposal.⁶⁷ URA reduced this rate in order to evaluate use of assets for future activities. The other major URA portfolio was acquired in 1996 from British Coal – fifty six former coalfield sites totalling 2,206 hectares. A Coalfields Task Force in 1997-98, led by URA, reported on a development strategy. In 1998 a further twenty six sites were acquired. A Coalfield Enterprise Fund was created to provide investment funding for small and medium sized enterprises in coalfield areas.⁶⁸ URA received some assets from the first UDCs to close, and although CNT was the main successor in 1998 for the remaining eight, URA took over some development projects (and associated

⁶⁶ The non-profit-making North Eastern Trading Estates Ltd was formed in 1936 following the Special Areas Act, 1934 to develop Team Valley, Gateshead. This Government intervention was increased by the Special Areas Amendment Act, 1937. In 1960, under the Local Employment Act, the company merged with West Cumberland Industrial Development Company Ltd (founded 1937) and North Western Industrial Estates Ltd (1946) to form English Industrial Estates Corporation. This provided and managed factories and industrial estates for the Department of Industry. A more independent commercial role was given in the Industry Act, 1980 and the English Industrial Estates Corporation Act, 1981. English Estates henceforth operated regionally. By 1986 it was the UK's largest developer and manager of industrial and commercial property – 24 million square feet at over 500 locations – and had created over 95,000 jobs. English Industrial Estates Corporation, *Industrial Estates*, Cheltenham/London, J Burrow & Co, 1971; R Simpson, *Novel and Unorthodox The Story of English Estates 1934-1994*, Gateshead, English Estates, 1994.

⁶⁷ National Audit Office, *English Estates: Disposal of Property*, Report by the Comptroller and Auditor General, London, HMSO, 1993; Simpson, pp4-7,10,17-18,21-22,25-26,36-37.

⁶⁸ Coalfields Task Force, *Making the Difference, A New Start For England's Coalfield Communities: The Coalfields Task Force Report June 1998*, London, Department of the Environment Transport and the Regions, 1998; English Partnerships, *Partnership Opportunities In England's Coalfields*, London, English Partnerships, nd [c1998].

records).⁶⁹ The largest was the Royal Docks from LDDC. URA also purchased property to perform its remit. For example, the freehold of the Greenwich Peninsula was bought from British Gas in 1997 to allow provision of a serviced site for the Millennium Experience and a Millennium Village.

Initiatives

A research programme generated findings on forestry strategies, community development, remediation technologies, and town centre management, and disseminated best practice advice. A Strategic Sites Database was developed in 1998 as a single information point for development opportunities, and a National Land Use Database (NLUD) in 1999 of 'brown field' sites for potential redevelopment. URA committed heavily to promotional sponsorship of events and awards. Millennium Communities Competitions show-cased mixed-use development, innovative building techniques, and economic and social self-sufficiency and sustainability. The first Millennium Villages were Greenwich and the former Allerton Bywater colliery site near Leeds.

Environmental initiatives included setting up the English Environment Fund (EEF), which was a charitable company to secure landfill tax donations to locally-based environmental projects. A similar body, ultimately independent of URA apart from board representation, was Contaminated Land Applications in Real Environments (CLAIRE) which tested sustainable and cost-effective remediation techniques. When merged with CNT in 1999, URA was planning a Land Stabilisation Programme and Derelict Land Trust.

Organisation and Structure

URA's six non-executive board members, appointed on fixed terms of office of three years, were drawn from local authority, trades union and private sectors, and remained unchanged between 1994 and 1999. The board included two, and from 1995 three, executive members of staff – the Chief Executive, the Finance and Administration Director (called Managing Director (Operations) from 1996), and the Development Director (called Projects Director from 1998). The Chief Executive performed the role of Accounting Officer and the Director of Communications acted as Agency Secretary. The Board formally appointed an Audit Committee and a Remuneration Committee in 1994.

URA staffing levels rose from 4 in 1993-94, to 284 in 1994-95, and by 1996 stood at 378 located in twenty offices and sub-offices. This grew to 466 in 1997-98. URA inherited English Estates offices in Gateshead, Thornaby, Doncaster, Liverpool, Cockermouth, and Truro, a number of sub-offices, and a project office in Chatham, Kent for the development of the former Royal Naval Dockyard. These were replaced in 1994 by a network of six regional offices to parallel the GOs. Thornaby merged into Gateshead for the North East, and new offices opened at Plymouth (South

⁶⁹ UDC records taken by URA did not rejoin those inherited by CNT when URA and CNT merged, as they went with URA regional staff into the RDAs.

West), Leicester (Midlands), and London Docklands (South East) covering Chatham. Cockermouth came under Liverpool (North West), and a sixth office was located at Doncaster (Yorkshire and Humberside). URA operated in this decentralised fashion with some twenty corporate staff in London.

URA took a 'bottom-up' approach with needs and opportunities identified locally to deliver a national programme regionally. In 1998 URA realigned into eight regions to match the proposed RDAs, establishing offices at Norwich and Guildford. The regional offices, and many staff, transferred to the RDAs in 1999, although London was delayed to coincide with the election of a mayor and assembly in 2000.⁷⁰ The Rural Development Commission (RDC) closed at the end of March 1999 and staff and activities relating to its Rural Regeneration Programme transferred to RDAs, whilst other staff and activities passed to the new Countryside Agency. RDAs also drew staff from GOs.⁷¹

English Partnerships⁷²

From May 1999, URA's corporate rump, then known as "Old EP", and CNT operated together as English Partnerships (EP). EP was a confusing creation – not least by retention of the name of one half of the organisation for the whole – but primarily because it retained the statutory bases and powers of both constituent bodies, with no legal definition or basis for the merged element. It operated publicly with a single corporate facade and under a single board and executive, but in its first year continued to operate underneath this as two distinct bodies whose separate establishments mostly did not interact. This distinction increasingly blurred as years passed, but was not helped by long-drawn-out harmonisation of terms and conditions, and an almost constant shifting of reporting lines and departmental names. From 2001 all new staff were appointed on URA contracts, so CNT employees reduced over time.

Purpose

EP was launched as a new national force for regeneration and development, and defined its role as working with central and local government, RDAs, the private sector and other partners to bring about "sustainable economic regeneration and development in the English regions".⁷³ By national and cross-regional co-ordination, it aimed to "support and help deliver regeneration

⁷⁰ UK *Greater London Authority Act, 1999, Ch 29*, London TSO, 1999. London's RDA – the London Development Agency (LDA) – reported to the Mayor of London rather than the Secretary of State.

⁷¹ RDAs moved under a different sponsor body to EP, the Department of Trade and Industry in 2001.

⁷² Unless otherwise specified, information in this section is drawn from: English Partnerships, "Official Launch Pack, London, 10 May 1999; English Partnerships *annual reports*; Author's Knowledge.

⁷³ For example, EP worked closely with urban regeneration companies (URCs). Created from 1999, as recommended by the Urban Task Force Report, these single-purpose bodies led neighbourhood regeneration within wider local strategies. Urban Task Force, *Towards an Urban Renaissance: Final Report of the Urban Task Force, Chaired by Lord Rogers of Riverside*, London, Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, 1999.

projects and programmes in the English regions”. In keeping with prevalent “New Labour” jargon, the launch material referred to “new jobs and new investment from new ideas and new approaches”. The new body initially provided common services to RDAs in finance, administration and information technology to ensure a smooth transition.

The four main areas of business activity were to manage, develop and dispose of assets and liabilities; facilitate partnerships for regeneration and development of areas of “key regional priority”; improve the environment by cost-effective re-use of previously developed and contaminated land; develop and implement private sector funding mechanisms for development and regeneration. The combined portfolio of the two organisations was considerable, with a total budget in 1999-2000 of over £500 million. EP managed the high-profile disposal in 2000-02 of the Millennium Dome. EP served from 2002 as the national regeneration agency, and the Government’s vehicle for house-building.

Organisation and Structure

EP retained the main CNT offices at Milton Keynes, Warrington, and Telford, and initially its sub-offices at London Docklands, Liverpool, Middlesbrough, and Tees Barrage. The retained EP offices were Old Queen Street, London (now the combined Headquarters), Haydock (Newton-le-Willows, Merseyside), Gateshead, and London Region, with sub-offices (two for the Greenwich Peninsula Project, one for the Royal Docks Project). A sub-office was briefly opened at Salisbury to house support staff temporarily retained from the former RDC.

The new body was launched with a board of a chairman and eight other non-executive members – three drawn from URA and two from CNT, whilst two were RDA chairmen. Initially the board had three committees, Property, Planning and Projects Board, plus an Audit Sub-Committee and Remuneration Sub-Committee. Management lay with an Executive Management Board (EMB) consisting initially of the Chief Executive, Corporate Strategy and Communications Director, Commercial Director, Development Director, and Finance and Administration Director (EP), all drawn from URA. Only the Finance and Administration Director (CNT) came from CNT – as it was deemed that administration could not be amalgamated for twelve months.

For the first year the majority of staff reporting lines remained unchanged. A few altered. For example, CNT Personnel and Secretariat staff were placed under URA staff who dealt with those functions, whilst URA Office Services at Haydock and Compliance at Old Queen Street were moved under the Finance and Administration Director (CNT). Different terms and conditions and cultures were noticeable. For example, an English Partnerships Pension Scheme operated in URA whilst CNT staff used the New Towns Pension Fund (NTPF) or the Local Government Scheme. NTPF closed after active members transferred into a closed tier of the EP scheme in 2002. URA staff did not operate a flexi-clock scheme, whilst CNT had from 1992. Flexi-time was replaced in 2003 by “flexible working”.

Staff functions reflected the history of the two bodies. Planners, engineers and surveyors continued the new towns programme. Administrative, personnel, audit, information technology, marketing and financial staff were common to both bodies, whilst legal and records management staff had previously only appeared in CNT. Reflecting URA interests, English Partnerships included staff concerned with “development” and, in contrast to new town organisations, highly-placed staff dedicated to functions termed “policy management”, “best practice” and “project management”.

3.6 NEW TOWN FUNCTIONS AND THE RECORDS CREATED

Records reflect the purpose, role and activity of an organisation as they are evidence created in the course of activity or as a conscious act of record-keeping of completed activity. Those of development corporations and CNT show the acquisition, development, management, and disposal of land and premises, and nurturing of new communities, as well as demonstrating organisational structure, and working practices. The records of the urban regeneration bodies are broadly similar.

The new town records collections consist of records created, received, and inherited by the organisation. These comprise agendas, minutes and papers of meetings of boards, chief officers, liaison committees, and specialist groups; accounts and other financial records; internal and external correspondence contained in case or project files and files on acquisition and disposal of property; title deeds and other legal documentation; tenders; maps, plans and drawings; technical surveys and reports; tenancy records; internal administrative records; promotional and information literature; illustrative material, such as photographs and models; charters, awards and certificates. The ‘records’ collections also include published and reference works, and miscellaneous memorabilia.

A corporation created records from inception. Amongst the earliest were the minutes of the first board meetings. Minutes themselves show the accumulation of records in performance of functions. For example, Bracknell’s fourth board meeting authorised the Acting General Manager to place an order with the Ministry for air photographs, air photo mosaics, and revised maps in three different scales, of the designated area.⁷⁴

The formats for these various types of records are, predominantly, paper files, plans, bound volumes, ledgers, reports, printed material, but also pictorial, audio-visual, microforms, computer-generated format, plus physical objects such as three dimensional models and artefacts. Formats changed over time with technological advances. For example the Basildon terrier in use

from the 1940s to 1990s was manual. That at Milton Keynes was computerised from 1989 into a land information system (LIS) and at Telford in the 1990s into a similar geotechnical information system (GIS).⁷⁵

Department names and staff job titles changed over time. Functions – depending on the prevailing management regime – had varying status and influence at different times, being stand-alone under a chief officer or combined under the umbrella of large directorates such as Finance and Administration or Technical Services. At CNT only Finance was continuously in the top tier of management, and only Estates and Administration staff were present at every location. The need for housing staff disappeared with transfers. All functions and departments used consultants where necessary or desirable, particularly after the Government's drive in the 1980s to out-source and privatise services reduced in-house specialists. However, basic functions of a corporation remained the same and universal. They can be broken down generically, together with the types of records produced by each function, as follows.⁷⁶

Executive

The chief employee of a corporation/CNT was a General Manager or Chief Executive, who was responsible to the Board for execution of its decisions. The post-holder needed wide experience of administration and leadership. As evident from Appendix VII, several early executives had military backgrounds, whilst later ones had often risen through new town ranks to senior levels. The post-holder had to create and/or lead a team of experts in all necessary fields, co-ordinate and progress work in all departments, control expenditure and revenues as the corporation's accounting officer, and consolidate advice presented to board members. All chief officers reported directly to the General Manager. Assistant or deputy general managers were usually also combined with being head of one of the functions, typically Chief Finance Officer.

Amongst records produced at this level were those of board and executive committees, annual reports and accounts to the minister in charge of the sponsoring department, corporate plans, and policy formulation and setting material. Files included high-level correspondence with ministers, civil servants, government bodies, politicians, and local authorities.

Administration

The Chief Administrative Officer serviced meetings of the board and its committees, of chief officers and other major groups. The function provided operational support services for the

⁷⁴ Minutes of the 4th Meeting of the Bracknell Development Corporation, 9 February 1950, in Bracknell Development Corporation Minutes, Nov 1949-Feb 1953, NT/B/G3/1, Berkshire Record Office.

⁷⁵ Milton Keynes Development Corporation, "Digital maps show who owns what", *The New Insider*, staff journal, no 76, 12 October 1989, p3.

⁷⁶ Information on job structures and content is drawn from: Basildon Development Corporation file: "Basildon Development Corporation Minutes From 10/2/1949 To 31/12/1953 (Meetings 1-72)", 1949-1953, BS1/130, Essex Record Office; Kirby; Author's Knowledge.

whole organisation. In this area were typically placed secretariat; personnel; registry/records management; central administration services (office accommodation, furniture and equipment, telephones, stationery, postal services, cleaning, hospitality); secretarial/clerical work; information technology. Sometimes it included public relations, and sometimes legal departments were combined with the administrative. The nature of the records produced by administrative and support functions were mainly procedural and operational. They included committee minutes and papers; staff employment records; health and safety records, such as accident books; lists, schedules and inventories of records, furniture and equipment; correspondence with suppliers and providers of goods and services; various forms for enabling, processing or recording a wide-range of daily transactions and activities.

The types of senior officer to be found were the Corporation/Board Secretary and/or Solicitor, a deputy, and Chief, Principal and Senior Administrative Officers. Lawyers would have membership of the Law Society. Other senior administrators might be linked to the Institute of Chartered Secretaries. They were supported by junior officers, secretaries, clerks and typists. Sometimes there were centralised typing pools, but generally clerical support staff featured in each functional area.

Architecture and Planning/Building/Quantity Surveying

These technical functions were often combined in one department. The Chief Architect could also be the Chief Planning Officer. The Chief Quantity Surveyor could report to him, or directly to the General Manager but with close liaison with the Chief Architect. The chief officers had various grades of architects, planners, and quantity surveyors beneath them, some of whom were in training posts working towards professional qualifications. In addition, there were model makers preparing physical models of proposed buildings, housing schemes and road sections, graphic designers, and draughtsmen to prepare maps and drawings. Land surveyors might sit either within the Planning or Engineering departments.

Senior architects were expected to have degrees in architecture and be fellows or associates of the Royal Institute of British Architects. Senior planners would typically have degrees in economics or geography, diplomas in town planning, and membership of the Royal Town Planning Institute. Some corporations preferred planners to also have architectural qualifications. Quantity surveyors were expected to have membership of the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors or Institute of Quantity Surveyors.

The Planning function was critical to the appearance of a town as it prepared and updated the outline plan for the whole area in conjunction with the engineering, finance and estates departments, and sometimes with appointed consultants. The plan set out the main areas for roads, drainage, and the main land uses of housing, recreation, industry and commerce. Master planning took two to three years, and involved consultations, public enquiries, and ministerial

approval. As smaller areas were ready for development they were planned in detail, contracts were let, and building work supervised. Planners would arrange for archaeological investigations to take place, and looked after resulting finds. Specialist employees advised on conservation and renovation of historic structures and the preservation and management of sites of ecological interest.

The Architecture function advised upon, and prepared plans and designs for, building and landscaping projects. It co-ordinated with Engineers the structural, electrical and mechanical services in building contracts, and let and supervised building contracts. The Quantity Surveying function ensured good value was obtained by providing cost-planning and appraisals, and collaborated with architects to select building materials and designs. They drew up bills of quantities, helped organise the letting of contracts, and, with clerks of works, measured the work done.

Records produced included master plan reports and drawings; aerial photographic surveys; land, geological and soil surveys, reports and studies; development and feasibility studies; planning submission, approval, constraints and regulation records, including presentation boards and three-dimensional models of planning schemes and architectural designs; building records. There were also archaeological, conservation and ecological surveys, studies and reports, the findings of which were sometimes produced for public consumption in illustrated publications.

Engineering/Infrastructure

The Chief Engineer shared responsibility with the Chief Architect and Planner for the appearance of the town, but concentrated on infrastructure. He provided civil, structural, electrical and mechanical engineering services. His department investigated, mapped and prepared sites for housing, industrial and commercial development, and tested construction materials. It liaised with outside authorities and public utilities over provision of water supplies, drainage, sewage, electricity and gas, telephones, and ensured that these proceeded in step with roads, bridges, underpasses, subways, and buildings. It could act as agent for the county council in constructing, within the new town area, highways, bridges and other structures.

Typical staff were specialists in various engineering fields. Engineers were expected to have degrees in engineering and membership of bodies such as the Institution of Civil Engineers, the Institution of Municipal and County Engineers, and the Institution of Highways and Transportation. Within engineering departments were also found technicians, tracers, and land surveyors.

Records produced included land, geological and soil surveys, reports and studies; aerial photographic surveys; structural drawings and details; adoption records (roads, sewers, street lighting). Functions could share staff with common value. Thus, Corby Development

Corporation's Estates draughtsman was also located in the Engineering drawing office, with the effect on records that Estates plans negatives and most drawings before 1971 were listed as Engineers plans in that department's registers.⁷⁷

Estates/Property Management

The Chief Estates Officer or Surveyor and staff negotiated the acquisition, by compulsory purchase if necessary, of all land needed for development. They then managed, let and eventually disposed of it. Farmland was usually leased back until needed, and this could be on a long-term basis. Some agricultural land was intended to be maintained as such under the Master Plan, and so staff assisted farmers to continue to operate successfully in the new town environment. Estates staff also had a role in attracting new industrial and commercial development to provide jobs, shopping and recreational facilities for a new population. They consulted established businesses about the relationship of their needs to the overall new town programme, which could involve relocation to new premises.

In addition to the estates surveyors, who were expected to be members of the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors, or of the Chartered Auctioneers and Estate Agents Institute, there were building surveyors to maintain property, and draughtsmen and geotechnical staff to produce maps and plans to support acquisitions and disposals. There were managers to run town centre shopping complexes until disposal, and landscapers and gardeners operating corporation tree nurseries. Before contracting-out of services, there were directly-employed manual employees such as caretakers and cleaners. Records produced included property acquisitions, management, and disposals; terriers; enquiries regarding commercial tenancies and relocations; agricultural licences; ground rent files.

Finance

The Finance department was at the forefront of every corporation, and of CNT. It received and paid monies, recovered debts, managed staff payroll, prepared annual budgets and accounts, assisted with cost-planning, income-expenditure forecasts, and appraisal of capital projects, ensured financial scrutiny and internal auditing of all accounts. The end of year accounts were certified by external auditors from accountancy firms as statutorily required. Records produced included accounts; budget reports; taxation; insurance; banking; grants, loans and subsidies; claims; payment orders, invoices and receipts; payroll; expenses and fees; rents and debtors; financial and risk assessments; audit reports.

Staff were accountants, systems analysts, cashiers and clerks. The Chief Finance Officer and senior staff were expected to have degrees in economics, commerce or business administration, and membership of the Association of Certified and Corporate Accountants, the Institute of

⁷⁷ Northamptonshire RO, "Corby Catalogue", vol 1, Box Nos 129-136, Engineering Department, np.

Chartered Accountants, or the Institute of Municipal Treasurers and Accountants. By the 1990s there was a trend for Internal Audit to broaden from its Finance base and to use staff with backgrounds other than accountancy.

Internal Audit independently appraised the methods and measures used by its organisation to safeguard assets, secure accurate and reliable records, operational efficiency and adherence to policies. Audit sections were directly responsible to the Accounting Officer – general managers and chief executives – and enquired into all parts of the organisation. A CNT document of 1992 specifies their right to “have access to all Commission records, documents, correspondence and any other relevant information necessary to undertake their task”.⁷⁸ They examined systems, probity, value for money, management, contract final accounts, financial appraisals for contractors, tenants and developers, and obtained creditor references for contract tender lists. Some functions were undertaken by other Finance-based sections such as Business Appraisal, as at EP from the 1990s.

Housing

Development corporations built housing for rent and were major landlords. The Housing Department was sometimes part of the Estates Department, but, if not, would work closely with it. The Housing Manager was likely to be a member of the Institute of Housing Managers, and was supported by assistant managers, housing assistants and inspectors, and clerks. Of all corporation staff, housing personnel had the most contact with the public, and these dealings shaped tenants’ perceptions of a corporation. In turn, dealing with difficult tenants could be unpleasant, and even dangerous, for corporation staff.⁷⁹

The Housing Manager and staff advised on the type, design, size and layout of houses to be built for rent. They liaised with employers on the allocation of tenancies to key workers and incoming employees. They prepared and updated waiting lists. They allocated, let and managed houses, collected and accounted for rents, and recovered arrears. When disposal of rental housing began, staff arranged advertising and sales. Records revolved around tenancies, and maintaining and repairing properties. The HATs of the 1990s kept these records on computer whereas for new town corporations it was mostly a paper exercise.

Legal

This department advised all the others, and the organisation as a whole, on legal aspects of work undertaken. It did conveyancing, liaising closely with Estates over acquisitions, leases and disposals, and with engineers, architects and quantity surveyors over contracts. When necessary, it represented the organisation at public inquiries, court cases and tribunals. It serviced the licensed premises committees where these existed. The Chief Legal Officer was a qualified

⁷⁸ Commission for the New Towns “Internal Audit Section - Internal Audit Some Questions Answered”, unpublished booklet, nd [1994].

solicitor, and support staff included other solicitors, articled clerks and legal executives. Records produced or held included title deeds and leases, and legal files on acquisitions, sales, contracts, and matters affecting development such as rights of way and wayleaves.

Public Relations/Marketing

The public relations and marketing function provided information on all aspects of the new town programme for residents, visitors and the media. It could take the form of press offices or information units within departments such as General Manager or Estates Management/Commerce, or be a stand-alone marketing department. It issued press releases, responded to media enquiries, and compiled press cuttings and video and tape collections of broadcasts referring to the town and organisation. It designed and organised promotional activities such as exhibitions, advertising, publicity material, talks and visits, publications, stationery and promotional gifts with corporation/CNT logos. It might produce a staff newsletter. It marketed and promoted sites for sale and development opportunities, including the international market with literature produced in foreign languages and employed agents in targeted countries. Staff interacted with all other functions. Records produced included photographs, slides, films and videos, audio-tapes and cassettes, newspaper cuttings, sales brochures, information pamphlets, publications, memorabilia and ephemera.

Social Development

This function assessed the social implications of the corporation's strategy and activities, and accordingly planned for social, cultural and recreational facilities, producing studies, and monitoring and evaluation reports. It liaised with local and national authorities and voluntary bodies concerned with the provision of health, welfare, education, social services, recreation, sport, and arts. It fostered community development in new areas. It could include archaeological work. Records produced included surveys, reports, community newsletters, and minutes of community group meetings.

Corporations varied in their approach to social and welfare issues. Some employed dedicated officers, perhaps heading their own departments, and involved in planning and design matters. For example, they advised on the need for, and provision of, meeting places, sports facilities and playgrounds. They welcomed new arrivals to corporation estates, helped form and foster clubs and community groups, and arranged social activities. Bracknell, Harlow, Hemel Hempstead and Stevenage all appointed officers responsible for social development. Other corporations felt that social planning could be met by technical departments, and other social aspects by housing and public relations staff. For example, at Aycliffe the Housing Manager was responsible for social development.⁸⁰ Some corporations felt that social welfare casework belonged to local authorities.

⁷⁹ Recollections of former MKDC housing staff, to author, 1992.

⁸⁰ Nicholson, *New Communities in Britain, Achievements and Problems*, p150.

The background of staff was less defined than in some other functions. The MKDC Social Development Director in the 1980s was an ex-clergyman.⁸¹

3.7 SUMMARY

This overview of organisations constituting the new towns movement, and the urban regeneration bodies with which CNT combined, demonstrates the complex administrative history behind the new town records – the sheer volume of organisations involved, and the scale of re-organisations, name changes, mergers, closures, and staff turnover. There is not space to recount detailed changes at departmental level over time within these bodies. This environment creates issues for the application of records management and preservation of historic archives that the thesis will further examine. The functions and disciplines that produced records, and the types of records produced, have also been discussed. The next chapter gives an overview of the development, and application, of records management within the new town organisations.

⁸¹ Author's Knowledge.

CHAPTER 4: OVERVIEW OF RECORDS MANAGEMENT IN THE NEW TOWN ORGANISATIONS

This chapter provides historical and chronological context for the records management events and issues which are analysed in Part 2 of the thesis. This overview traces the main developments in records management in the case study, critical dates and periods, and illustrates sea-changes in attitudes and approaches.

4.1 ESTABLISHING A RECORDS MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK, 1965-1984¹

Records management for the new town development corporations and CNT in their early years basically equated to filing, with, after a few years, closed file storage. Some corporations appointed designated filing clerks, but mostly the task fell within the duties of secretaries and administrative assistants. CNT's approach, when formed in 1961, was no different to the earlier corporations.²

The Hertfordshire Initiative

The Solicitor of Stevenage Development Corporation deposited some old title deeds in Hertfordshire Record Office as early as 1952.³ However, records management (as the systematic review and disposal of closed records) dates from late 1965 on the eve of the transfer of Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield Development Corporations to CNT. Peter Walne, County Archivist of Hertfordshire, having taken up his post after the closure of Hemel Hempstead in 1962, was anxious to secure the archives this time around, and had not given up hope of obtaining Hemel's, which had transferred en bloc to CNT.⁴ Walne approached a CNT board member who was also an alderman on his county council, the corporation's chairman and general manager. He highlighted the Hertfordshire and Hemel Hempstead connections of CNT chairman Henry Wells, and the recent deposit of Ebenezer Howard's papers.⁵ When the Welwyn Garden City and

¹ Unless otherwise specified, all information and quotations in this section are taken from CNT Glen House file: N22/2.

² Filing practices are examined in Chapter 5.1.

³ Hertfordshire Record Office office file: E8/1, "Stevenage Development Corporation", 1952-1982.

⁴ Peter Walne (1925-1999) was a leading figure in the archives profession by 1965, holding posts as County Archivist of Berkshire (1952-62) and Hertfordshire (1962-90). His professional activities included Honorary Secretary of the Society of Local Archivists (Society of Archivists from 1954) (1952-78). He was a visiting lecturer and examiner for the archives diploma course at the University of Liverpool (1956-71) where by 1957 he was already addressing the then novel subject of records management. William Serjeant, "The Society's Chronicle: obituaries, Peter Walne (1925-1999)", *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, vol 21, no 2, October 2000, pp228-232; Information on Walne's records management lectures supplied by Miss Elizabeth Danbury of SLAIS, UCL, April 2002.

⁵ Henry Wells (1911-1971) knighted 1966. Chief Estates Officer Ministry of Town and Country Planning (1943-46); Hemel Hempstead Development Corporation board member (1947-50), Chairman (1950-62); Bracknell Development Corporation Deputy Chairman (1949-50); CNT Deputy Chairman (1961-64), Chairman (1964-70). *Who Was Who*, 1971-1980, p844.

Hatfield corporations deferred to the interests of CNT, Walne wrote to CNT Secretary, Frank Schaffer.⁶ He pressed for a meeting on “the preservation of the records of the Development Corporations” and suggested that the records of Hemel Hempstead be used as a pilot scheme.⁷

The 1965 Meeting

Walne’s intervention led to a meeting between him, CNT, the Public Record Office (PRO), and the Ministry of Housing and Local Government (MHLG). The aide memoire prepared for the meeting in December 1965 indicated that the four main factors for CNT in deciding whether to deposit any records with Hertfordshire Record Office were its working need to refer to records, the possible wish of borough or district councils to retain records in their towns, public access, and confidentiality. By the time of the meeting, its purpose had broadened from the fate of Hertfordshire new town records to discussing Walne’s suggestion “that steps should be taken to preserve the records of former development corporations on the transfer of their assets to the Commission for the New Towns”.

The meeting noted that all development corporation records had transferred to CNT and most of them remained in daily use in CNT’s local offices. The records of CNT proceedings and administration were held at Glen House. Although the records could be brought under the terms of the Local Government (Records) Act, 1962, it was agreed that CNT records “might best be preserved under the 1958 [Public Records] Act in view of the greater measure of protection offered thereby”.⁸ It was also felt that corporation and CNT local executive records should be deposited in county record offices whereas the headquarter records, unrelated to any particular town or county area, might more appropriately be preserved at the PRO. Although the oldest records were only eighteen years old, there was no reason subject to working needs, staff availability to sort records, and “suitable safeguards” why some could not be “transferred soon”. A working group of Walne, the Departmental Record Officer (DRO) of MHLG, and the PRO Inspecting Officer for MHLG, was formed to inspect and report upon corporate records at Glen House, and local records and those of former corporations held in the four towns.⁹ The County Archivist of West Sussex assisted at Crawley.¹⁰ It was agreed that the PRO would investigate the matters of status and deposit. MHLG undertook to:

⁶ Frank Schaffer (1910-1985) a civil servant in the Ministry of Town and Country Planning from 1943, including seven years as head of the New Towns Division; Secretary of CNT (1965-73); author of *The New Town Story* (1970). Frank Schaffer, *The New Town Story*, Paladin, London, (revised edition 1972) p1; Commission for the New Towns, *Commission for the New Towns Annual Report and Accounts 1985-86*, Commission for the New Towns, London, 1986, p21; Family Records Centre, Index to Deaths 1985, Frank Schaffer 6/4/1910 Eastbourne 0585 18 0463.

⁷ CNT duly opened a file: reference 83/1, “Preservation of Records”.

⁸ UK *Public Records Act, 1958, 6 & 7 Eliz 2, Ch 51*, London, HMSO, 1958.

⁹ E W Berry of MHLG and F T (Bill) Williams of PRO.

¹⁰ Francis W Steer (1912-1978) County Archivist of East and West Sussex (1953-59) and West Sussex (1959-69). Previously Assistant Archivist and County Archivist at Essex Record Office (1946-53). *Who Was Who*, 1971-1980, p754.

“consider the issue of advice to all development corporations on the need to ensure that important records were preserved and recommending the adoption of a system of filing that minimised the work of scrutiny and sorting out”.

Subsequent to the meeting, the PRO Records Administration Officer, Wardle, wavered over whether CNT should be brought within the Public Records Act, 1958.¹¹ If the bulk of CNT’s records were inherited corporation ‘live’ files and CNT continuation files on local matters, which all would be of local interest:

“It is one thing to deposit in County Record Offices some part of a body of records which is undoubtedly covered by the Public Records Act, and another to go out of one’s way to make the Act applicable to records most of which are not regarded as suitable for preservation in the Public Record Office.”

1966-68: Consideration of the 1966 Report

The working party report was completed in October 1966, and distributed by the PRO to CNT and MHLG. It confirmed that CNT records could be dealt with as public records, with those of Headquarters deposited at the PRO, and those of Executives in local record offices appointed as places of deposit under section 4(1) of the Public Records Act, 1958. It recommended that such status be sought under paragraph 7 of the First Schedule of the Act. The possibility of the records not being declared public records was allowed for by stating that Executive records could still, by agreement, be preserved in local archives, and central records could be deposited at the PRO under section 2(4)(e) of the Public Records Act. The report was to be the key document for discussions on managing or disposing of new town records for the next seventeen years.

Unfortunately, CNT took nearly two years to assess the report. In 1968 Neville Williams of the PRO urged that a decision be not “unduly postponed”.¹² He noted that the Keeper’s Report for 1967 referred to the working party’s report and stated that “the status of these records is under consideration”.¹³ During this time the Public Records Act, 1967 was enacted reducing the closure period from fifty years to thirty.¹⁴

1968-70: The CNT Report

CNT’s response in July 1968 focused on how it might reduce the quantities of records in its offices. It was shaped firstly with a view to the work involved, secondly as to whether there was a need to press the Lord Chancellor to make some or all of the records of all new towns into public records, and thirdly the timing and conditions of records transfers. The status of the

¹¹ D B Wardle, PRO Records Administration Officer (1964-67). Cantwell, *The Public Record Office*, pp 150-152.

¹² Dr Neville J Williams (1924-1977) PRO Records Administration Officer (1967-69), Deputy Keeper (1970-73). Cantwell, *The Public Record Office*, pp110-111,151-152; *Who Was Who*, 1971-1980, p863.

¹³ Public Record Office, *The Ninth Annual Report of the Keeper of Public Records on the Work of the Public Record Office and the Ninth Report of the Advisory Council on Public Records 1967*, London, HMSO, 1968, paragraph 36, p6.

¹⁴ UK *Public Records Act, 1967, Ch 44*, London, HMSO, 1967.

records would affect disposition of archive material. Schaffer invited comments on CNT's report from Williams, and Howard Marshall of MHLG with a view to a meeting.¹⁵ MHLG indicated that a representative from the New Towns Division, and the DRO – the third DRO at MHLG to be involved in two years – would attend any meeting. Williams did not respond until May 1969 when he asked Marshall to resolve what had “hung fire” since 1965 and submit a case to the Lord Chancellor for a determination on the status of CNT records. Unfortunately for records management, John Palmer at MHLG took the view that the matter covered development corporations as well as CNT, and that these were much more localised bodies whose records must be transferred to the successor in ownership of their property, and also the Government had stated it would wind up CNT.¹⁶ Therefore:

“... it would be awkward at this juncture to determine the legal regime for the records of bodies which for different reasons must be assumed to be of limited life, and the nature of whose successor bodies is not yet determined.....in practical terms there are I think no records which would have to pass to the Public Records [sic] Office for some years yet and the immediate task seems to be for the Commission to organise their records in a way which facilitates ultimate preservation of what ought to be preserved. It would also be right to open up this same question with the development corporations.”

However, R E K Thesiger of the Lord Chancellor's Office (LCO) felt that Williams was right and that Palmer's points should be considered by the Lord Chancellor as a result of a submission. He invited Palmer to “think it over”. Williams wrote to Palmer in July 1969 urging that the good work of 1966 should not be “pigeon-holed” and pointing out that:

“It is precisely at the time of dissolution or reorganisation that records are most ‘at risk’ and unless a well-defined procedure exists for their disposal the consequences are invariably disastrous.....we are concerned about the central records of the Commission which are essentially national in character. This interest will continue irrespective of the Commission's future and is an added reason for wishing to obtain an early determination as to their status as public records. Not only questions of transfer are concerned here but fruitful liaison in the working out of First and Second review procedures as well as the designation of suitable places for local deposit. Sound records management and good housekeeping alike can only benefit from the guidance we can give and I believe it would be a real misfortune if we were unable to make progress along the lines envisaged in the Report.”

Palmer seemingly remained unmoved. A file note of October 1969 shows that Schaffer and McKenzie pressed him for a decision in principle and he “agreed to look again at the file”. However, he did nothing, as he admitted when he wrote to Thesiger over a year later in October 1970:

“...because I remained in some doubt about the wisdom of doing so in view of the declared intention of the previous Government about the future of the New Towns Commission. The present Government have now made it clear that they have not come

¹⁵ Howard W Marshall (born 1923) Assistant Secretary at MHLG/DoE (1968-76). *Who's Who*, 2006, p1504.

¹⁶ John Palmer (born 1928) Assistant Secretary at MHLG (1965-71), Under Secretary at DoE (1971-76). *Who's Who*, 2006, p1724.

into office with any intention to propose amendments of the legislation under which the Commission operates. We had accordingly better proceed to get the status of the Commission's records settled."

Meanwhile, CNT had started to put its records in order in line with its 1968 report. The Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), Malcolm McKenzie, wrote to the three town managers in October 1969 instructing them to strip files of "extraneous material" in order to simplify selection of files for permanent retention.¹⁷ In 1971 the Manager, Crawley, Robin Clarke, sought permission from McKenzie to "take prompt advantage" of the County Archivist of West Sussex's request to meet and discuss the possibility of transferring Crawley corporation and CNT records.¹⁸

Co-incidentally, public records and new towns could have become inextricably linked at this time in another context. From 1968 to 1969 Milton Keynes, at the behest of its corporation's chairman, Lord Campbell, and with MHLG support, was a strong contender for the site of the new PRO building. The eventual selection of Kew – the preference of PRO Keeper Harold Johnson, supported by Thesiger of LCO – was a narrow victory. The grounds for Kew's selection were ease of access for the public, and proximity to other research centres and the Hayes storage repository.¹⁹

1971-72: Submission for Public Records Status

By March 1971 the long-awaited draft submission to the Lord Chancellor had been produced by Palmer in the newly named Department of the Environment (DoE). Schaffer's response shows that he maintained a good grasp of the issues, and wanted the following added:

"The records of the central organisation of the Commission, on the other hand, are not capable of being split up into local units and deposit in the Public Record Office or some other central place would be essential."

He felt that the submission should stress that:

"new towns are not only a major achievement in urban development but a completely new approach to the problem that gives them an added importance as part of the social history of our time."

and argued that the submission should also include development corporations as:

"It would be a little odd if corporation papers only came within the 1958 Act on transfer – it is just as important to protect them from the outset, and indeed I would hope that the development corporations would always have in mind the need for adequate filing

¹⁷ Malcolm G (Mac) McKenzie (1917-1979) CNT Chief Administrative Officer (1962-73), Chief Executive and Secretary (1974-78). *Who Was Who*, 1971-1980, p499.

¹⁸ Mrs Patricia Gill, County Archivist of West Sussex (1969-73). Society of Archivists, "Recent Appointments", *The Society of Archivists, The Newsletter*, no 65, June 1993, p8.

¹⁹ Harold C Johnson (1903-1973) PRO Keeper (1966-69). *Who Was Who*, 1971-1980, p416; Cantwell, *The Public Record Office*, pp90-92,150.

measures to facilitate eventual preservation so that the Commission do not inherit a miscellaneous and disordered collection of paper.”

Schaffer pointed out that sorting out CNT’s papers of twenty years accumulation in its existing towns was already a “very long job”, and drew attention to Scottish corporations which were not “at present” part of CNT’s writ. Palmer proved obdurate, maintaining that the status of the corporations should be considered after the determination on CNT, at which point the New Towns Standing Committee and the Scots would be consulted. Thesiger supported Schaffer, advising Palmer that as the draft stood “it would be likely that the Lord Chancellor would decide that these were not public records”. Palmer incorporated Schaffer’s points into the final submission of May 1971.

Unfortunately, Thesiger had to tell Palmer in June 1971 that there was “some difficulty” and sought clarification from the DoE regarding the status of CNT and the corporations.²⁰ He also enquired whether the Ministry in 1959 had considered “the position created by the Public Records Act only a year before”. Also, from correspondence it appeared that the PRO did not consider development corporation records to be public records. Palmer replied in August 1971 that the DoE saw no distinction in status in the relationship of CNT and the corporations with the Government, and there was no evidence of such distinction in the 1959 New Towns Bill.²¹ There was no evidence of the effect of the Public Records Act being considered at the time.

In September 1971 Thesiger reported that the Lord Chancellor had considered the submission and was “disposed to think (though he has not reached any final conclusion) that these are not public records”.²² However, Hailsham²³ offered an Order in Council which could also include records of development corporations and other bodies.²⁴ At this crucial stage Palmer again proved an obstacle to sorting out the new towns records comprehensively and logically. In November 1971 he replied to Thesiger that it was:

“not appropriate to seek an Order in Council covering the records of new town development corporations because this could raise a direct conflict with the Secretary of State’s discretion under paragraph 2 of Schedule 10 of the New Towns Act 1965 as to the disposal of documents of the corporations on their winding up.”

The DoE was prepared to proceed with CNT alone, but here again Palmer was in no hurry to see public records status implemented, stating that it would:

²⁰ It had been noticed that in the New Towns Act, 1946, there was no equivalent to section 35(3) of the New Towns Act 1965 [which stated CNT was not a servant or agent of the Crown] and to its equivalent section in the 1959 Act creating CNT.

²¹ Palmer reported that section 35 (3) of the New Towns Act, 1965 largely followed the wording of the Electricity Act, 1957 to ensure the CNT did not enjoy any special status or immunity as regards the law, and was seen as the equivalent of sections 2(4) and 20 of the New Towns Act 1946 applying to corporations, and now covered by sections 3(4) and 2(3) of the 1965 Act.

²² Under paragraph 7(2) of the First Schedule to the Public Records Act 1958.

²³ Quintin M Hogg, Baron Hailsham of Saint Marylebone (1907-2001) Lord Chancellor (1970-74, 1979-87) *Who Was Who*, 2001-2005, pp220-221.

“probably be better to deal with this in a review of other bodies, the status of whose records is undetermined, and not to try to deal separately with the Commission. I certainly see no urgency so far as the Commission are concerned.”

However, Palmer stated that he would draft a paper for new town corporations and local authority associations indicating the proposals. This was done six months later in May 1972 by C W Dodge of the DoE. McKenzie asked whether Scottish corporations had been considered. Dodge replied that the Public Records Act did not apply to such bodies. This missed the point, as new town records could be considered as a whole with the Public Record Offices of Scotland and Northern Ireland replacing that of England where applicable. The memorandum went out to the New Towns Association (NTA) and local authority associations in July 1972.

Another insight into the DoE's tardiness can be seen in correspondence between Bracknell Development Corporation and the NTA.²⁵ Ron Parker, Head Record Keeper at Bracknell, sought advice in March 1972 about records storage and destruction. NTA's Secretary, Garry Philipson, replied two months later explaining that he had been pressing the DoE for an “official line” since March and had only received an answer “as much by chance as by our repeated efforts” in May.²⁶ NTA had only just learned of the discussions between the DoE, LCO, PRO and CNT concerning CNT's records and the desirability of making rules for corporations compatible with those of CNT, and the DoE would “belatedly” consult NTA about the proposals. Philipson explained that the Order in Council would not cover corporations and “they will simply be expected to transfer their accumulated records to the Commission when they are wound up: i.e. they will have no rights of selection and destruction.”

CNT's board was informed of developments in July 1972, when it was told that pending the Order in Council:

“work can proceed....on the selection of those records which ought to be permanently preserved and eventually transferred to a place of deposit. This need not be the Public Record Office itself. Many of the Commission's records are primarily or largely of local interest and the people in the new towns and the local authorities might wish to see them locally held and available. Following the making of an Order in Council consideration can be given to appointing local places of deposit for some classes of records, as provided in Section 4 (1) of the 1958 Act.”²⁷

²⁴ Under paragraph 7(1) of the Public Records Act, 1958.

²⁵ Bracknell Development Corporation/CNT file: 305-4, “Corporation Records; retention/destruction programme for”, 1972-1982, consignment 3441/3/4, EP Records Centre.

²⁶ Garry Philipson (born 1921) NTA Secretary (1970-74); General Manager/Managing Director, Aycliffe and Peterlee Development Corporations (1974-85). *Who's Who*, 2006, pp1776-1777.

²⁷ CNT Glen House file: 83/3, “Records – Public Record Office”, 1982-1985, EP Records Centre; Commission Paper 90/72, 21 July 1972, in CNT Glen House file: CNT Board Minutes and Papers 1972 Pages 306-630 [bound volume], EP Records Centre.

1972-76: Lack of Progress

Action was needed regardless of the delays with the DoE and LCO. Records had continued to accumulate in the seven years that their status remained unresolved. Storage had become a “somewhat urgent” problem at Crawley, but negotiations with West Sussex Record Office in 1971-72 did not immediately proceed to transfer, due to CNT’s unresolved status. There was no file correspondence on records at CNT from late 1972 until August 1975, reflecting the inactivity.

Opportunities were not only being lost in CNT offices. More seriously, the risk of remaining corporations disposing of records in a manner inconsistent with the aims of the 1966 report were growing. Several corporations experienced storage problems and considered disposition of historic records. In 1974 Stevenage discussed appointing an archivist, and Telford did so in 1975. In 1972, the same year that Bracknell approached NTA, Harlow Development Corporation asked CNT for advice on disposition and its proposals to deal with a local museum. All Schaffer could do was send a copy of the 1966 report, and, citing the example of record office help at CNT Crawley Office, advise Harlow’s General Manager to “sound out your county authorities”.²⁸ He added plaintively: “You will see that it has taken eight years to get thus far!”

These brief exchanges with Bracknell and Harlow highlight the effect of failing to resolve the status issue, the relationship between CNT and corporation records, and of excluding corporations from the 1966 proposals. Control and consistency would have been provided by the Public Records Acts being applied to both CNT and corporations from 1966, but lack of direction allowed corporation records to be dealt with differently.

1976-78: Housing Transfer

In late 1976 the DoE was approached by corporations querying the custody of housing records after transfer to local authorities under the New Towns (Amendment) Act 1976. CNT considered the model scheme of 1966 highlighted that documents relating exclusively to transferred land should pass to the local authority, and other records would be retained by the corporations/CNT, and “ultimate custody could be decided at leisure after transfer”. The Chief Legal Officer expressed the view:

“That to contemplate seeking O. in C. or any other action regarding N.T.C. or D.C. records as an incident of housing transfer would not be appropriate.”

An extract from CNT’s Executive Committee minutes for 6 January 1978 records:

“It was understood that the Department had revived interest in and was studying a proposal to bring the Commission’s (and development corporations’) records within the

²⁸ Benjamin (Ben) Hyde Harvey (1908-1999), Harlow Development Corporation Deputy General Manager and Chief Finance Officer (1947-55), General Manager (1955-73). *Who Was Who*, 1996-2000, p253.

Public Records Act. Meantime it was suggested that sorting of records should be carried out with this in mind. Details of the Department's proposal and of an earlier working party report (endorsed by the Department) recommending categories of records suitable for retention would be re-circulated."

Housing transfer prompted Corby's corporation to want to reduce its records and seek deposit in 1977 with its local record office in preparation for closure in 1980. It met with disinterest from the County Archivist of Northamptonshire.²⁹

1978-79: Order in Council

In 1978 the DoE blamed lack of progress since 1972 on the wish of the Lord Chancellor's Office only to invoke an Order in Council if "really necessary", and on the uncertainty over CNT's future and therefore the destination of its and the corporations' records. However, the situation had changed with the New Towns (Amendment) Act, 1976 transferring housing to local authorities not CNT, and with the Secretary of State's announcement in April 1977 on CNT's future. The DoE decided that two categories of records should pass to local authorities. Firstly, documents which normally transfer to a purchaser on disposal of a property (title deeds), plus relevant drawings, rent records, housing management documents relating solely to the leases and tenancies of the properties transferred. Secondly, contracts or other records creating rights, liabilities and obligations relating to transferred property. Historical records would remain with corporations and therefore pass to CNT, and so the DoE would now pursue the Order in Council.³⁰

CNT's Chief Administrative Officer's note to managers in 1978, re-circulating the 1966 report, prompted Michael Biggs, Manager at Welwyn Garden City, to re-open discussions with Hertfordshire Record Office.³¹ He reported that Walne remained:

"keen to acquire as much appropriate material as we are prepared to let him have now, and before it may be destroyed. In discussion he emphasised that access would always be available to us to all papers sent to his archives, or that he could provide photo copies, whereas they would not be accessible to the general public for 30 years under current legislation."

A list of record categories for possible deposit was compiled, based on and updating the 1966 report. The matter was discussed by CNT's executive committee in 1978 but minuted that it be re-reviewed after the Order was made. Biggs advised Walne that no transfers could take place before the Order. Walne was philosophical:

²⁹ Northamptonshire Record Office office file: New Towns Box File, 1977-, Northamptonshire Record Office.

³⁰ This information was also contained in paper GMC 761 Item 9 "New Town Records" received by the General Managers Committee (GMC) of the NTA, meeting on 24 February 1978. A similar paper (SC 329) was accepted by the Chairmen's Standing Conference of the NTA on 15 March 1978. Bracknell DC/CNT: 305-4.

³¹ Brigadier Michael W Biggs (born 1911) CNT Manager (Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield) (1967-78). *Who's Who*, 2006, p185. [No relation to the author].

“...in these things patience is of the essence and having waited fourteen years for the Order in Council another one or two won’t harm.....The day may no doubt come though.”

A breakthrough came in July 1978. Patricia Barnes, the PRO Records Administration Officer, told CNT that the Order would probably not be laid until the Autumn, but that the PRO and LCO were content for CNT to transfer any records worthy of preservation to places of deposit appointed by the Lord Chancellor under section 4 of the Public Records Act.³² Barnes copied the letter to Walne, who in his capacity as Honorary Secretary of the Society of Archivists, could spread the word to other archivists. CNT’s Chief Administrative Officer, Jack Blomeley, gave town managers permission to “proceed with arrangements for transfer of appropriate records (on the lines of the original 1966 Working Party Report)”. Crawley Office began deposits at West Sussex Record Office.³³ Blomeley similarly advised Harlow Development Corporation, when it sought guidance. In September 1978 Blomeley gave the General Manager of Stevenage Development Corporation background information on the proposed Order in Council, with the caveat that it was unclear whether it would apply to all new towns.³⁴ Again, in October 1978 Blomeley responded to a request for information from Bracknell Development Corporation with a copy of the 1966 report indicating that the “Commission’s review procedures are broadly as suggested in this report”. Washington Development Corporation was formally asked by Tyne and Wear Archives Service (TWAS) in August 1978 to deposit records “of historical importance”, which led to a first deposit, of old board and executive papers, in 1979.³⁵

In January 1979, Robin Clarke, a party to the 1965 discussions and recently promoted from Crawley to Chief Executive, received the Draft Order in Council 1978 that CNT records would be treated as public records for the purposes of the Public Records Act 1958. It was filed with the comment from Blomeley: “At long last”. CNT assumed the Order went through and told enquirers from Stevenage and Bracknell corporations as such. But by the end of July 1979 Blomeley’s Principal Administrative Officer, Howard Austin, was recording that the Order “has not yet gone through ‘owing to pressure of other business’”. However, in August he agreed with the DoE that discussions should proceed within existing CNT towns, and those “1980 towns” due to transfer, as if the formal Order had been passed. This was the advice given to Greenwood of Stevenage when he asked if his corporation could enter discussions with Hertfordshire Record Office. Meanwhile, shortage of storage space troubled CNT. It was alleviated between 1978 and

³² Dr Patricia (Pat) M Barnes (1930-1998) PRO Assistant Keeper and Principal Assistant Keeper (1954-78), Records Administration Officer (1978-82), Deputy Keeper (1982-85). Frank McCall, ‘The Society’s Chronicle: obituaries, Dr. Patricia M. Barnes (1930-1998): personal recollections’, *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, vol 20, no 2, October 1999, pp250-252; Cantwell, *The Public Record Office*, p153.

³³ CNT Crawley Office file: C/6570/8, “Commission Offices Broadfield – Files and Records”, 1978-1982, consignment HQ 2132, EP Records Centre.

³⁴ Jack N Greenwood (1922-1989) Stevenage Development Corporation Chief Finance Officer (1967-76), General Manager (1976-80). *Who Was Who*, 1981-1990, p308.

³⁵ Tyne and Wear Archives Service office file, 38/2 (formerly 32/7), “CNT”, 1978-.

1982 by using a unit at Hemel Hempstead as a “Depository” for closed legal, estates and accounts records from the Hertfordshire offices and Glen House.³⁶

1978-82: Transfer of Corby, Stevenage, Harlow and Bracknell

Bracknell and Harlow corporations had sought official guidance on records in 1972, but received no clear direction. Closure brought matters to a head. By 1978 Corby, Harlow, and Stevenage corporations all knew that they would close in 1980, and Bracknell in 1982.

Disposal of records of the first corporations to close in the 1960s had been tied up with CNT’s developing records management and the long-drawn out process of establishing public record status. However by the 1980s, remaining corporations were actively disposing of records themselves before closure. Bracknell’s General Manager, Gerald Bryan, learning of Stevenage’s records arrangements during a visit there in 1980, sought CNT’s approval “in the absence of ...any official guideline...from either the department or the Commission” to seek the help of the county archivist.³⁷ Both CNT and the DoE replied with no objections. In fact, as doubt hung over CNT’s future under the new Government, Austin commented that “it is by no means certain these days that the Commission will in fact be involved”.

Stevenage, Harlow and Bracknell therefore dealt with many of their older records as part of closure, in association with their county archivists. Corby, without receiving the assistance sought from Northamptonshire Record Office, left most of its records for CNT. These corporations transferred with the public records status of new town records unresolved, and with no formal records policy or guidance in place at CNT other than the 1966 report. The limited guidance CNT could offer is attributable to the failure to progress the 1966 report and establish a firm policy. This situation was worsened by the uncertainty over CNT’s future in the political climate of 1976-80.

1980-83: The Joint Working Party and Report of the Association of County Archivists and New Towns Association

By June 1982 eight corporations had transferred to CNT, and Runcorn had transferred to Warrington and Runcorn Development Corporation. Target closure dates had been announced for a further eight corporations, and the final four were due to be wound up in the late 1980s.³⁸ Interest in records disposition was therefore heightened. In 1980 a discussion meeting was held

³⁶ CNT Hemel Hempstead Office file: 01/5/13, “Preservation of Records and Disposal of Records Centralisation of Records”, 1978-1983, consignment CNT 101, EP Records Centre; CNT Hemel Hempstead Office file: “Fernville Lane Depository”, 1980-1981, consignment 3441/3/5, EP Records Centre.

³⁷ Gerald J Bryan (born 1921) General Manager Londonderry Development Commission (1969-73); General Manager Bracknell Development Corporation (1973-82). *Who's Who*, 2006, pp302-303.

³⁸ Northamptonshire RO: Box File, “Winding up of Development Corporations” list, 11 June 1982.

by the newly-formed Association of County Archivists (ACA).³⁹ This event was co-ordinated by Vic Gray, who, as County Archivist of Essex, had just taken the records of Harlow and expected those of Basildon to follow.⁴⁰ Organisers recognised that the development of new towns “will certainly be a major future area of research in any consideration of the mid-20th-century history of individual counties” and that they had left an “indisputable mark upon both the landscape and upon the social and economic life” of their areas. Gray suggested closure of corporations posed “both a challenge and a problem for many county archivists” as to which records were to be preserved from the enormous quantity, the requirements of the successor bodies, and the relationship to the Public Records Act. All but one of the repositories covering the English new towns and Cwmbran attended.

A Joint Working Party of the ACA and New Towns Association (NTA) was established in 1982, to examine selection processes. In July 1982 Austin circulated the draft list of types of records for permanent preservation, prepared by Telford’s Archivist, to the administrative officers in the seven town offices for their comments based on “practical experience”, as all but Corby had dealt with record offices in transferring records.⁴¹ The ACA/NTA working party prepared a paper on new town records for preservation in September 1982, which, following approval by NTA, was issued to corporations to encourage closer liaison between them and local archivists before wind-up. A number of contacts were made as a result, and the corporations at Telford and Milton Keynes created in-house records centres in 1983 and 1985 respectively. Milton Keynes in fact examined its records and archives situation from 1981, as part of wider consideration of museum and archive provision for the whole town.⁴² However, generally, there seemed, on all sides, to be a reluctance or inability to do anything substantive until closure dates for corporations were announced. Also, the DoE refused to sanction the recommendation to bring corporations under the Public Records Act, on the grounds that it risked conflict with the Secretary of State’s discretion, under Schedule 10 of the New Towns Act, 1981, to exclude books, papers and documents from transfer to CNT.⁴³

³⁹ Later re-named Association of Chief Archivists in Local Government. Northamptonshire RO: Box File, “Association of County Archivists Report on the Second Meeting of the Executive Committee at GLC County Hall 7 October 1980”; “Association of County Archivists New Town Records a discussion meeting’, programme, 1980”, in CNT Glen House file: N22/5 (formerly 83/1/4), “Preservation of Records – County Archivists Association/N.T.A.”, 1980-1983, consignment HQ 1391, EP Records Centre. Copies of this programme are held by several county archivists in their office files, as seen by the author.

⁴⁰ Victor W Gray (born 1946) County Archivist of Essex (1978-93). *Who’s Who*, 2006, p895.

⁴¹ Harlow Development Corporation/CNT file: N22/5/B (formerly 94/13/1) “County Archivist, Records – Harlow Development Corporation From June 1978 To December 1982”, 1978-1982, EP Records Centre.

⁴² Milton Keynes Development Corporation file: 1/15/4/1, “Administration – Internal Administration – Archives”, 1981-1985, EP Records Centre.

⁴³ CNT Glen House: N22/5.

1982: CNT Centralisation

In 1982-83 CNT closed six of seven town offices and operated from Glen House and Corby, with a short-term residual office at Bracknell. This prompted the first major re-organisation of records in CNT history. In December 1981 Blomeley instigated a working party to make proposals for the “consolidation of records in the context of centralisation”.⁴⁴ Richard Overton, Senior Administrative Officer (Crawley) and Office Manager-designate in the new structure, co-ordinated the records moves. He was experienced from his time at Crawley, and liaison with West Sussex Record Office. He issued comprehensive guidelines, noting that it was in the town offices “where the donkey-work will have to be done”. He aimed to keep to a minimum the number of records transferring to a new registry at Glen House. Closed records would go to a store, to be selected, or be deposited with local archives, “provided towns are able to make satisfactory arrangements for recovery of a file on demand”.

Centralisation finally allowed transfer of archival records to Hertfordshire Record Office from Hemel Hempstead and Welwyn Hatfield offices, sixteen years after Walne had first requested them. It also prompted staff to look at guidelines for disposal or preservation of records, and to consider how and where to store semi-current and closed records. With a central London location and little space, CNT entered into commercial storage arrangements with a company called Tele-Link (later Britannia Data Management).⁴⁵

1984: Achievement of Public Record Status

Despite the hopes of 1978 that the Order in Council was imminent, a further delay of six years had accrued. During this time major events affecting records had occurred, with the closure of four corporations, CNT’s centralisation, and the ACA/NTA Working Party on new town records resulting in a report to replace that of 1966.

In April 1983, Austin, now Board Secretary, briefed the new Chief Executive on the history of the Order in Council saga since 1972:

“If the Order is actually made (and there are some grounds for feeling it is not regarded as the most pressing of the DOE’s preoccupations) we will need to establish formal contact with the Public Record Office in order to legitimise the arrangements already informally agreed – the Headquarters records to go in due course to the PRO and the local records to authorised depositories (County Archivists). Local records have already gone, but we have not yet reached the stage of transferring HQ records.”

The Order covering the records of CNT was finally prepared by the Lord Chancellor’s Department (LCD) in late 1983 and time-tabled to be laid before Parliament for debate in

⁴⁴ CNT Hemel Hempstead: 01/5/13.

⁴⁵ CNT Records files: 30/1/1/8, “Records – General and Policy – Records Management – Tele-Link”; 30/1/1/9, “Records – General and Policy – Records Management – Britannia Data Management”, 1992-1998, EP Records Centre. Tele-Link Archives joined with Kestrel Data

February 1984 and for Privy Council final approval in March.⁴⁶ The Order to treat all CNT records as public records for the purposes of the Public Records Act 1958, was passed on 11 April 1984.⁴⁷

This climax of nineteen years correspondence, meetings, delays and frustrations seemed rather low-key. It was left to CNT to write to the PRO in May 1984 to discover the “immediate practical implications” of the Order.⁴⁸ The PRO asked CNT to appoint a DRO who should then contact the Inspecting Officer allocated to CNT. As certain records would be appropriate for local deposit, Alexandra Nicol, the Liaison Officer with places of deposit, would be involved.⁴⁹ Austin was appointed DRO by the Chief Executive and met PRO representatives on 12 June 1984.⁵⁰ Within days Austin provided the PRO with alphabetical lists of Headquarters and Stevenage files held in Tele-Link, sample pages of individual box lists as sent to Tele-Link, and copies of the 1982 guidelines on centralisation of records.

Austin’s file note of the meeting showed that clarification of the status of records passed direct to archivists by corporations before, “but often in anticipation of” transfer to CNT was sought, as “strictly speaking” only records “passing through the hands of” CNT became public records. It “would seem sensible for all new town material deposited with an archivist to be treated the same way (whether by operation of the Public Record Act or by instruction by the Commission).”⁵¹ At this stage this was only considered to affect Harlow and Stevenage records. There seemed uncertainty about Bracknell. Due to the 1982 centralisation, the meeting amended the 1960s agreement that Headquarters records go to the PRO and records from local offices to county archivists, to also allocate specific town material in Headquarters to local archivists, and for the PRO to only take central organisation or policy issues. The PRO felt it would only want CNT’s minutes and papers of board and major committees, main policy files and perhaps some sample ‘case’ files. Subject files would be of more interest to local archivists.

The PRO did not keep to the agreed timeframe, and from November Austin chased Nicol for progress. He pointed out that establishing the status of records held in local archives was urgent, with the imminent transfer of Northampton and Redditch in April 1985 and the limited storage space available for the CNT offices to be established in those towns when the corporation offices were vacated in June. Skelmersdale would be taken over at the same time, and whilst in that

Storage and Management in 1986 to form Britannia Data Management (BDM). However, CNT staff habitually referred to “Telelink” into the 1990s.

⁴⁶ CNT Glen House: 83/3.

⁴⁷ SI 1984 No 547 The Public Records (Commission for the New Towns) Order 1984.

⁴⁸ CNT Glen House: 83/3.

⁴⁹ Mrs Alexandra N Nicol, PRO Assistant Keeper from 1969, Liaison Officer, Principal Assistant Keeper, then Head of the Government Services Department until retirement in 1997. Cantwell, *The Public Record Office*, pp 97,153.

⁵⁰ Inspecting Officer Derek Barlow was succeeded in December 1984 by Hilary R Shelton (later Mrs Saw).

⁵¹ CNT Glen House: 83/3.

instance the corporation premises would be retained, CNT wanted to progress records matters whilst corporation staff remained available.

The reply from Nicol in January 1985 was disappointing. The LCD unhelpfully “found no easy answer to the problem of status” and advised that “all records of the development corporations which have passed through the Commission are public records and any which have not, are not”. She suggested that to avoid future pitfalls records pass on paper to CNT and physically to record offices. CNT discussed with corporation staff the possibility of dating transfer paperwork as the day after transfer of assets to CNT. Happily by March the LCD had reversed its earlier opinion and Nicol informed Austin that it had been agreed that once a corporation was wound up and its assets transferred to CNT the records already passed to the local record office pass to CNT as well and also become public records. Nicol thought this “an eminently satisfactory conclusion to what was perhaps a storm in a tea cup” and Austin concurred that “it must be more straightforward now to know that all the new town material in one place of deposit has the same status”.⁵² Nicol wrote to county archivists in April 1985 explaining that the Order in Council had excluded corporation records, but the consequent “confusion” about their status had been resolved.⁵³

4.2 DEVELOPING A RECORDS MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK, 1985-1992⁵⁴

Records management in CNT entered a new phase. The legislative framework had been established. A DRO existed. PRO and some county record office contacts were in place. There were retention/disposal guidelines from 1966 and 1982. Some deposits had been made in local record offices. There was scope for putting right the problems that had accrued over twenty years. What was needed was effective direction and resourcing to maximise the potential of this situation. In retrospect, the seven years from 1985 can be seen as a development period for the records management framework in CNT. This took place against constant change, expansion and new situations for CNT as it took over the work – and records – of eleven corporations. Also, nearly all the senior and key figures who had been involved in CNT records management prior to 1985 had gone. Austin retired in April 1985 and was replaced as DRO by the Head of Management Services, Howard Ruffman.⁵⁵ A new generation had to experience and tackle the issues.

⁵² CNT Glen House: 83/3.

⁵³ Northamptonshire RO: Box File.

⁵⁴ Unless otherwise specified, all information and quotations in this section are taken from files: CNT Glen House: N22/2; CNT Records files: 30/1/1/1, “Records - General and Policy - CNT Policy”, 1992-1998, EP Records Centre; 30/1/3/1, “Records - General and Policy - Public Record Office - General”, 1992-1998, EP Records Centre; 30/3/1/1 “Records - Departmental - Corporate General”, 1992-1998. EP Records Centre.

⁵⁵ Howard S Ruffman, CNT employee from 1975, Head of Management Services (1982-92), Head of Personnel and Management Resources (1992-93), Director of Personnel and Management Services (1993-98). CNT’s second DRO (1985-88). Author’s Knowledge.

1985-86: Transfer of five corporations

Although CNT had gained public record status, Northampton, Redditch and Skelmersdale corporations received little direction from CNT as to what they should do with records when they transferred in April 1985. Nothing had changed when Central Lancashire followed at the end of December, and Basildon in 1986. All five corporations had dealt with county archivists direct after the ACA/NTA report, and a number of deposits were made before and after transfer. However, CNT's record holdings and responsibility were increasing rapidly (particularly with Basildon which appeared to have kept nearly everything since 1949), albeit they were contained within local offices. The PRO did not get involved. There was no contact from January 1985 until March 1987 when CNT asked for PRO help with issues posed by corporation records.

1987: Creating a Records Policy Document

In 1986 prospective transfer of Peterborough Development Corporation in 1988 prompted the new Director of Finance Administration and Legal Services (DFALS), Gilbert Probart, to ask Ruffman to report on CNT policy on those records which CNT would need so that "early advice" could be issued. Ruffman confirmed that no "comprehensive written guidelines" existed, and that in the case of the four corporations in 1985 CNT had given them copies of its 1982 records centralisation guidelines. Basildon had not been given any advice. Ruffman reported that the 1982 guidelines had been inadequate for the transfer situation and a number of matters "had to be dealt with on an ad hoc basis". He would therefore "rectify the position by preparing a suitable policy document that will cater for future transfers (and also for rationalisation at Basildon)".

Ruffman undertook to consult the PRO, update the requirements of individual disciplines, take account of organisational changes since 1982 and make judgements about Tele-Link storage arrangements. He used the 1982 ACA/NTA report. He also contacted the Telford Development Corporation Archivist, but received no additional information to that from 1982. DFALS asked heads of service to comment on the guidelines for their disciplines "in the light of experience, future needs, statutes [sic] of limitations, and also observations of the National Audit Office as pertinent". A deadline for responses of February 1987 had to be extended to March, since "Unhappily no such observations have yet been received". At the end of March 1987 the Records Policy Document was produced, all but the Senior Administrative Officer (Estates) having responded. The latter was told that the document referred to "revision of Estates and Building Surveying Records being in process and amendments could be made when he was in a position to reply". CNT immediately issued the document to the corporations of Peterborough, Washington, Aycliffe and Peterlee, and Cwmban, and later to Warrington and Runcorn.

Ruffman met the PRO's Alexandra Nicol, now Principal Assistant Keeper (Appraisal), and Inspecting Officer Hilary Saw, and agreed that the 1982 ACA/NTA report formed a good basis for advice to corporations. CNT would encourage corporations to nominate an officer to liaise with local record offices, and CNT should indicate which records it wished to receive.

Surprisingly, in view of later advice to the author about the need to preserve organisational and departmental provenance, the PRO agreed with regard to inherited files, that it was “the Commission’s own convenience which should dictate whether these files were left open and Commission paperwork added to them or not.”

It was recognised that CNT did not know whether any corporation material in Tele-Link had been seen by, or would be wanted by, archivists, that CNT expended some £15,000 per annum on storing records it did not use, and that it had amassed an unprocessed backlog of its own records. Part-time resourcing to date was “insufficient to the task of formulating and implementing a records management policy”. The PRO made clear that it could not undertake the review for CNT. Nicol wrote to county archivists enquiring whether they were aware of any corporation records they would have liked had they not gone to CNT at closure.

1988: Focusing on the Issues

The increasing volume of records, the prospect of more from remaining corporations, and the messages from the PRO, created a flurry of activity surrounding the transfers in 1988 of Aycliffe and Peterlee, Peterborough, Washington and Cwmbran, and the closure of CNT Northampton Office. Hilary Moon emerged as the leading figure in CNT’s record management for the next four years. Formerly of Northampton Development Corporation, where she assisted the Corporation Secretary with disposal of records in 1984-85, she took the Headquarters post of Administrative Officer (Office Services) in March 1986. She was involved in issues such as removal of Northampton records from Corby Office in 1987, and from January 1988 took up specific records management duties. She worked closely in these matters with the Deputy Director of Finance Administration and Legal Services (DDFALS) and Solicitor, Les Field, until his retirement in 1992.⁵⁶ Although it was Ruffman, as Head of Management Services, who advised staff in 1988 to expect delays in retrieving files from Tele-Link during its five week relocation, Moon was referred to in writing as DRO by 1989.⁵⁷

Nicol and Saw were dissatisfied with progress by February 1988. Meeting this time with Field and Moon, and Brian Webb, the only employee remaining from the 1965 records meeting, they felt they had not been kept informed of what steps CNT was taking in records matters, or of changes in the post-holder of DRO.⁵⁸ The PRO had had to ask for a copy of the policy document in May 1987 although it had been distributed to corporations in March. Nicol wanted to secure early liaison between corporations, CNT, and local record offices, and it was felt that as CNT had

⁵⁶ Les Field, Deputy Director of Finance Administration and Legal Services (DDFALS, 1986-92) and Solicitor (1982-92). Previously in the Legal departments of Harlow Development Corporation and CNT Harlow Office. Author’s Knowledge.

⁵⁷ CNT Glen House file: AG 21, “Tele-Link Archives”, 1986-1993, consignment 1271/50/7, EP Records Centre.

⁵⁸ C Brian Webb, Principal Administrative Officer (DETS), formerly Senior Administrative Officer at Welwyn Hatfield Office dealing with transfer of records to Hertfordshire Record Office in 1982, and a junior administrative officer at the 1965 meeting. Author’s Knowledge.

sent corporations the policy document rather than a letter, they regarded it as for reference only. CNT pointed out that it was dependent on co-operation of corporations and would welcome any influence the PRO could exert on the DoE to direct corporations.

Saw considered the policy document a disposal schedule for corporation records, yet review and selection of CNT's own records also required attention as some were nearing thirty years of age, and CNT might close in the 1990s. At this time, the majority of CNT records remained in Glen House. Subsequent to their meeting, Nicol pointed out to Moon that she now realised that CNT already breached the Public Records Act by holding corporation records over thirty years old from creation, and their date of transfer to CNT was irrelevant. Saw criticised Tele-Link as "a dumping ground and as an alternative to proper review procedures". The lack of referencing hampered identification, retrieval and review. Even board records, which were prime records to be deposited at the PRO "as quickly as possible", could not be identified. CNT faced "a huge backlog of records of dubious value from amongst which those of historic worth must be extracted". CNT had not applied dedicated resources to fulfil its legal responsibilities, even though in March 1987 CNT had given the impression of favouring the appointment of a professionally-qualified archivist as its DRO. Saw made a stinging indictment:

"The moment one enters the Commission's premises one is aware of an organisation which is concerned to present and maintain a positive image. Sadly, its records management does not yet fit this image."

Such criticism helped those within CNT seeking to promote records management. Brian Webb advocated storage of records corporately rather than "the somewhat fragmented basis which appears to be happening at the moment." He felt that existing practice of technical officers advised by heads of service "may not always be the best method of dealing with this problem" but rather "the question of records should be dealt with formally as part of the arrangements for the take over of Development Corporation assets."

In February 1988 Moon wrote to the Chief Executive reporting on meetings with the PRO, explaining how CNT and inherited development corporation records were public records and that "records" applied not only to files but to "films, photographs, three-dimensional models, videos and microfilm". With some inaccuracies, she informed him that records became the property of the PRO after thirty years at which time all records not needed for day to day work should be handed over to the PRO together with a list of records still needed and a formal request to retain them. Moon warned that CNT already breached the Act with regards to inherited records of Basildon, Bracknell, Corby, Crawley, Harlow, Hatfield, Hemel Hempstead, and Welwyn Garden City, and would be in breach when it received the records of Cwmbran, Aycliffe and Peterlee in April 1988. CNT would be in breach with its own records in 1989. She indicated that CNT was investigating the implications of the Data Protection Act with the Data Protection Inspectorate, PRO and the Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency (CCTA). She recommended

that a central record be compiled of files held by CNT's consultants. At this point CNT probably held about 50,000 files and 300 rolls of plans in Tele-Link storage and probably twice that in its own offices. It was recognised that "considerable work needs to be done to bring our records into some form of order" and the suggested course of action to be taken was threefold. Firstly, at Glen House, departments were, "over a period of time", to evaluate their own records and label them with retention dates, and plans were to be properly indexed. Secondly, the records at Tele-Link were in different degrees of order. The pre-centralisation ones were indexed and boxed by town. Post-centralisation files simply had a CNT prefix and were "inadequately indexed", showing that "the soft option of sending a file to the repository, rather than evaluating the need for its retention, has always been taken". The majority of these required examination. Plans were poorly stored and indexed. The PRO Inspecting Officer was willing to supervise this work. Thirdly, Moon advocated that Redditch and Corby files used by staff at Glen House be sent to the town offices so that town records could be assessed together. Condition of records in town offices varied and local Administrative Officers should be given guidance, and assistance of local archivists sought, with approval from the "Records Officer" at Glen House before any deposits.

The problematical involvement of heads of service was evident in March 1988. The Head of Planning and Architectural Services wrote to Warrington and Runcorn Development Corporation's Chief Architect and Planning Officer seeking a meeting regarding records, and discussing the implications of a proposed National New Towns Centre on dispersal of corporation records. Moon protested that the officer-in-charge of records should manage this. Field enjoined senior colleagues to "please note that the Chief Executive has made me responsible for the Commission's records", and pass to him "all memoranda relating to records at present held by the Commission and, in the future, to be handed to the Commission by dissolved Development Corporations". He explained that CNT had "become aware that it is a body which falls within the scope of the Public Records Act", that ex-employee Peter Lane was investigating the records situation in order to "recommend methods whereby the Commission's records can be identified, put in good order and, where appropriate, placed in the custody of the Public Record Office". Efforts would be made locally before the corporations formally closed in June 1988 to index and identify all records to be passed to CNT. In the first instance those of Aycliffe Peterlee would be transferred to Washington Office. Once identification of Tele-Link holdings was underway, decisions would be made regarding all other records in CNT's possession at various locations. In order to assist evaluation, Field asked Executive Officers and departments to provide details of their record holdings, including those inherited from corporations and those disposed of by corporations to local archives or councils. There was a poor response.

Deposits to Tele-Link – by now Britannia Data Management (BDM) – were put on hold in May 1988 whilst Moon investigated whether BDM could identify, re-index and evaluate documents stored with them in conjunction with PRO guidelines, as part of their relocation to a new site in East London. A pilot study was envisaged. If BDM could not deliver, other commercial firms

would be considered. In fact, following creation of Washington Office in 1988, CNT agreed to store closed Washington records at the commercial Records Management Unit of Tyne and Wear Archives Service (TWAS), rather than in London. This reflected not only parochial desires, but also CNT's growing dissatisfaction with BDM. By August 1988, after four months, the embargo on BDM storage was causing discomfort, with boxes awaiting dispatch spreading into offices.⁵⁹

Field and Moon had adopted an approach of using ex-staff as consultants, and applying available staff and temporaries on site to sort and list records from transferred corporations for disposal, as appropriate, to county archivists, closed storage or destruction. They increasingly interested themselves in more formal and professional records management. They developed strategies and objectives. They demonstrated concern with issues of retention, legal status, duplication, quality of referencing and titling, records held by consultants, indexing, and automation of finding aids. They put questions to the Law Society, National Audit Office, DoE and the Cabinet Office.

Moon wanted both local and Headquarters files relating to towns to be sorted with the town files of the pre-1982 centralisation, to present records of each town as a complete entity, leaving mainly policy files for the PRO. She advocated establishing records management at Glen House. She wanted liaison with local offices about the issue of file duplication. Control was needed over files loaned to, or held by, consultants, and tightening-up of closed storage procedures so that transfers and retrievals went via a records officer and items were returned to storage (some were still on loan from BDM after several years). Due to CNT's poor indexing, identification of records in BDM was difficult and some files were recorded under five or six different headings.

In August 1988 Moon suggested creating a centralised indexing system based on PRO guidelines, with central opening of files and allocation of file titles, labelled file covers including review dates and destinations if known. Existing files would be added gradually over a period of time. She advocated restructuring resources so that, additional to herself and five Office Services Assistants, a Records Assistant would operate a records management computer. Field supported the staffing proposals, re-grading of Moon to Senior Administrative Officer (Office Services), acceptance of BDM's offer to advise on CNT's records management, using two "librarians" to index at Glen House, part-time employment of former corporation librarian Ken Small at Redditch Office, and funding a temporary cataloguer at Hereford and Worcester Record Office.

1989-90: Progress Towards Formal Records Management

Field and Moon began to put their objectives into practice. The Records Policy Document was revised in 1989. A Records Management Unit (RMU) was established at Glen House with a temporary Records Assistant (Graham Hadingham) to control movement of records between Headquarters and BDM and to liaise with town offices about records required by Headquarters or for BDM storage. Re-cataloguing of BDM records was progressing with the RMU evaluating

⁵⁹ CNT Glen House: AG 21.

lists for disposal actions. However, the relationship with BDM continued to deteriorate, as in March 1989 CNT considered BDM's re-listing of boxes was inadequate, necessitating CNT re-examining contents. CNT considered a seminar of archivists to determine a common selection policy.

CNT received its first report from the PRO Inspecting Officer in July 1989 which summarised activities from January 1988 and prompted Chief Executive Woodhall to report on progress and aspirations to Ian Nicol of the DoE's New Towns Division. Woodhall requested that the DoE prevail upon Telford and Milton Keynes corporations to "liaise closely" with CNT on records storage and management, adding that "Initial reports indicate that good physical conditions exist at Milton Keynes but it is, of course, important that the systems should as far as possible, be similar to those adopted by the Commission." There was apparently no view that CNT might learn from MKDC.

In 1989, when Warrington and Runcorn transferred, a second records management unit, with ad hoc staffing, was established under Brian Burke (who moved from Skelmersdale Office technical library) with a remit, unlike Glen House, to control current filing. Moon's progress report of November 1989 indicated that in excess of one million records in various formats were expected to be received by CNT. Work was progressing at all sites, and MKDC's records management operations had been inspected. At this stage it was believed that there were 42,700 files and 1200 Cwmbran plans in Tele-Link, 1200 plans withdrawn to Glen House for sorting, and 50,000 files, 30,000 microfilms and 30,000 plans in Glen House.

In 1990 the RMU stated that it was ready to send its first deposit to the PRO – 11 volumes of signed board minutes, 73 volumes of board papers and minutes and 28 volumes of associated indices. The PRO allocated Class FJ 1 to Commission Minutes and Papers. However, actual transfer did not take place until 1995 due to the work involved in complying with PRO listing and packing criteria.

In February 1990 Field sought a meeting with CNT's Chief Executive to discuss "several matters of strategic importance relating to the Commission's future policy with regard to record management". He enclosed a draft report from BDM and a report on computerised systems. A decision was needed as to whether CNT would resource the listing and management of CNT and corporation records, including those already deposited with archivists, so that they were properly identified and regularly reviewed and disposed of. Computerisation was seen as the most efficient solution, possibly adapting existing town computers running CNT's estate management system, Ermis, to also hold records information. It was thought too difficult to run a traditional central registry, but registration of all new files onto a computer, with addition of existing files over time, to give a centralised index, was favoured. Staffing was limited, and additional temporaries would be required for data-capture. The rate of staff departures affected the ability

of Records staff to tap into knowledge. Moon advocated devoting more staff over two to three years to records work and ensuring sufficient staff were retained at least up to the closure of corporations. In the long-term she thought that a records system could be run with “comparatively few staff”.⁶⁰ As increased requests for funding were expected from county archivists, a policy was required for what CNT was prepared to fund and what it expected in return, such as having lists made according to CNT directions. Those records with a long retention period which could not be handed over to local archivists needed to be stored, and, as BDM’s service was considered “both poor and inefficient”, CNT was investigating whether to continue MKDC’s records centre and a funding arrangement with Buckinghamshire County Council. This would provide “the benefit of first class storage facilities” and “use of staff fully trained to manage development corporation records.” A visit to MKDC’s records centre had revealed that “archived records are in superb order”. The services offered by TWAS’s commercial storage unit were also compared favourably with BDM.

1990: The BDM Report

Field and Moon took a textbook step in 1988 of commissioning an external report on CNT’s records management, which was provided in March 1990. It is debatable whether CNT learned anything new, but an external source may successfully make points to management which are ignored when raised by internal staff. Also, it seemed practical to use BDM where CNT had a stakeholding, and the BDM consultant had been Chairman of the Records Management Society (1986-89).⁶¹

As CNT expected closure in the mid-1990s, and had limited resources, there was no enthusiasm for long-term or capital-intensive solutions. The report indicated that storage of plans on optical disc had been examined and rejected on these grounds in addition to the engineers’ preference for working with paper. The report discussed CNT’s powerlessness over corporations’ record-keeping, and the corporations’ failure to sort their records, leaving CNT a wide variety of incompatible systems in a haphazard fashion, and highlighted CNT’s own reluctance to apply resources. As time progressed, knowledge within CNT of corporations and their records diminished. CNT’s recommendation in its 1987 Records Policy Document that corporations appoint archivists, had not been followed, as only Telford and Milton Keynes had done so.⁶²

CNT’s record-keeping was criticised. Disbanding Glen House Registry had led to significant loss of centralised knowledge and control, to poor retrieval mechanisms, to inconsistent and inaccurate file titling. Conversely, decentralisation was considered to have provided closer and faster access for staff, shared filing costs amongst clerical posts, and given greater user-

⁶⁰ CNT Records: 30/1/1/1.

⁶¹ Shelley Hardcastle, “Commission For New Towns Records Management Report”, Britannia Data Management Ltd, March 1990; Records Management Society web site, <http://www.rms-gb.org.uk/rms-chairs> (accessed 2005).

⁶² In fact these two corporations had appointed archivists prior to CNT’s Records Policy Document.

knowledge of files. The report's appendix indicated that there were 331,800 linear feet of records in Glen House, contained in 50,000 items excluding drawings. The biggest concentrations were, as to be expected, in Legal Services (929 linear feet), Estates (716 linear feet), Finance (582 linear feet), Planning and Architecture (306 linear feet) and Engineering Services (290 linear feet). The other record-holding locations identified at that time were Chief Executive, Secretariat, Chairman, Administration, Personnel, Management Services, and General Office.

Overall, the report identified four main problems: use of staff and storage resources, archival retention and selection, retrieval of information, and inherited incompatible systems. It identified CNT's priority as:

"To establish a records management framework which satisfies the three needs, organisational, legal and user whilst dealing with records which have crossed organisational boundaries. Indeed the crossover which has occurred once, from DC to CNT, is likely to be made more complex by a third transfer."

It made nine recommendations. In terms of resources the report stated that:

"When a DC is dissolved and there is a large intake of records, space at Glen House becomes critical. Some areas are more critical than others notably the Drawing Office which is desperate for space. Technological solutions have been considered and rejected. The obvious solution is to make staff available to investigate the age and activity of the records. A proportion of such records will be redundant and once identified can be destroyed. This cannot easily be predetermined given the variable quality of the host DCs records management systems. Other transferred records e.g. files and drawings which need to be kept but will be used infrequently, if at all and to which immediate access will not be required should be stored off-site."

CNT had "done much to address the routine space requirements of non-current records" by using off-site commercial storage. The report writer did not name the provider, which was her own employer, BDM.

With regard to 'live' records, the report suggested that re-introduction of a central registry would be "staff intensive" and "irksome" to users, and recommended continuing with devolved local filing systems. Indirect control could be achieved through registration of all file titles on a central database. The computerised register should also record "vital non-active" records, but how far back to take data-capture would need to be assessed. It was suggested that 70,000 to 100,000 items could be captured in CNT. Disposal dates of property should be registered on the computerised index.

The report felt that the second problem, selection, could be tackled once re-cataloguing was complete, but should be done by "expert staff" – retired managers or professionally-qualified archivists – under the guidance of a PRO Inspecting Officer. The third problem, of information retrieval, would improve through a "professionally structured classification and indexing scheme which provides consistent accurate file titling based on subject/function hierarchy". CNT's

Records Assistant should provide a classification scheme, guidance to departments, and a manual of practice. The fourth problem, of inherited records, could be tackled by establishing a team to work locally in corporations to process records transferring to CNT. For those already received, targets should be set and monitored for clearance of backlogs awaiting processing by departments.

The report acknowledged that unless the operational value of records exceeded conversion costs, it was difficult to justify major changes to inherited systems. However, there was a danger in that CNT's "corporate memory which enables these records to be retrieved lies in human memory" would diminish, and CNT's records management system was not "currently capable of fully replacing this facility". This situation, if unchecked, would deteriorate further when CNT transferred records at its own closure. The impact of litigation, where CNT or its successors were unable to access, produce and interpret key records once staff with local knowledge had disappeared "will be far more serious with potential losses of millions of pounds". In fact, the report writer felt:

"The question of what happens to records and who will need to use them when the Commission itself ceases to exist is the most critical issue to be raised by the study."

Saw of the PRO felt the report's value was negated by the time taken to produce it since November 1988, since CNT staff had discovered for themselves most of the report's findings. Some of the report recommendations, such as proper file classification, were advocated or implemented by professional archivist David Biggs after 1992, before he knew of the report. It was not referred to when he joined CNT. Yet it can be seen that in the two years following the report, leading up to the major re-organisation of CNT in April 1992, there were developments in keeping with its recommendations.

1990-91: Progress

After the bustle of 1988-90, having identified and assessed the issues, attention seemed directed at how best to take records management forward. This was against the background of dealing with the record implications of regionalising the northern offices, and transfer of the final corporations. In May 1990, Saw criticised CNT's decision to delegate work to BDM, rather than establishing a larger in-house records management unit, as having delayed progress. She advocated completion of work to identify records held in breach of the Public Records Act by 31 March 1991, urged commencement of transfer of selected files to the PRO, and wanted more thorough knowledge and control of files not in commercial storage. She conceded that these were not "small tasks". She found no improvement in BDM services offered to CNT, noting that re-catalogued lists for Bracknell files had been lost in transit leaving CNT to reconstruct, and cited receipt by CNT of records that were not its own as having "clear and worrying implications as to the standards of security provided".

In 1990 it was decided that a dedicated records manager, in place of the ad hoc responsibility undertaken by Field and Moon, would “better ensure policy implementation and a co-ordinated approach to the diverse records management activities”. However, to avoid lengthy recruitment and induction, Moon was to be seconded from office management to these tasks for at least two years until records management became more routine. At September 1990 records were being sorted in parallel at all CNT offices, and relevant county archivists consulted. At Glen House, back-capture of information onto the computer system was considered the main problem, but all files would require improved labelling and lists. Field and Moon were preparing for takeover of Telford and Milton Keynes and still trying to get a records policy on consultants agreed by heads of disciplines. Field’s situation report to Chief Executive Woodhall led to discussion in late 1990 about creating a free-standing records management unit under Field and Moon, with control of town-based Records staff (to avoid them being diverted by local management), current filing, and a centralised computer. Records Assistant Hadingham was made permanent in January 1991. There seemed a consensus in favour of dedicated records management, with the Chief Executive himself stating that records management could not be a “two year task-and-finish exercise” but “will remain with us”.⁶³ However, a manpower audit report for Field in June 1991 reflected that records management in general, and the scope and scale of CNT’s task, remained undervalued. Whilst it acknowledged that records management should be a corporate responsibility, it recommended that regional-based staff should transfer under local administrative officers once initial review work was completed. It warned that “a disproportionate amount of time could be spent on this work” and that a records system might “become over elaborate”. Minimal staffing would avoid future redundancies or redeployment, and it was suggested that town-based staff had a vested interest in prolonging records work.⁶⁴ Field maintained that “overall control should remain with headquarters in order to ensure an overall conformity with Commission policy”.

Through 1991 advice and assistance was sought by, and given to, officers of Scottish corporations approaching closure.⁶⁵ Field and Moon organised meetings ahead of the creation of CNT’s Northern Office in 1991 when Warrington Office took over the work of six (later seven) northern towns.⁶⁶ Burke’s unit was formalised, but unfortunately the piece-meal approach to resourcing it, and continuation of seven office systems rather than applying a new single registry system, created weaknesses which emerged in subsequent years.

1991-92: Transfer of Telford and Milton Keynes

Transfer of the last two English corporations finally gave CNT an in-house infrastructure for formal and professional records management that went beyond registry activity inherited from

⁶³ CNT Records: 30/1/1/1.

⁶⁴ A J Freeman, “Review Of The Records Management Function Within The Commission For The New Towns”, Commission for the New Towns unpublished report, June 1991.

⁶⁵ Similarly, in 1994, two years before its closure, Livingston Development Corporation approached the DRO, when considering appointing a consultant. CNT Records file: 30/1/6, “Records – General and Policy – Scottish New Towns”, 1992-1998, EP Records Centre.

⁶⁶ Initially termed “Northern Office” and later “North Office”.

corporations, and a booking-in and out intermediary service for commercial storage. Dawley, and its successor Telford Development Corporation (TDC), operated a central registry from creation to closure, but Telford was also a pioneer amongst new towns in employing an Archivist in 1975 and having a succession of qualified post-holders through to 1988.⁶⁷ It also opened a dedicated records centre in 1984 for a records management programme. However, as noted by Moon in 1990, the registry and records centre had, without appropriate staffing, deteriorated in the period leading to closure. Disposal of corporation offices also meant that the purpose-built records office did not continue under CNT. However, a records management unit was created for the new CNT Telford Office in 1991. An experienced TDC employee, Rae Green, operated a registry, deeds room, and off-site store at Stafford Park industrial estate that had finding aids and facility for on-site working.

Of greater significance for CNT was the fact that MKDC had paid for the on-site services of Buckinghamshire County Council archivists from 1985, and invested in a successful off-site records centre operation at Stacey Bushes, Milton Keynes. CNT's inheritance of these premises and systems in 1992, and the recruitment of one of the archivists, David Biggs,⁶⁸ was to be the catalyst and prompt for subsequent records management policy and practice within CNT. By 1991 CNT already viewed Stacey Bushes as a solution to its dissatisfaction with commercial storage, and after transfer it was expanded and fitted-out to meet CNT's needs, gradually replacing all alternatives. The new Milton Keynes Office was set up with a records management section to run a registry, deeds strongroom and off-site records centre.

4.3 APPLYING RECORDS MANAGEMENT: MANAGING THE RECORDS INHERITANCE, 1992-1998⁶⁹

The transfer of twenty two corporations had been completed in thirty years, and now CNT looked to its own disengagement and closure. CNT entered a phase of applying formal and professional records management. For the first time it had a qualified and professional archivist and records manager on its establishment, as recommended since 1987. Records management was finally applied collectively to the (inherited) records of the English new towns (and Cwmbran). However, due to internal politics and regionalisation, and the usual problems associated with low status and priority, records management was still not applied in a planned and strategic manner. Implementation continued to operate on a disjointed and reactive basis, making progress where opportunities allowed but receiving setbacks, all associated with organisational change. The efforts made over six years however led gradually and eventually to an almost ideal position for records management when CNT was given a new remit and lifespan from 1998.

⁶⁷ Interview: 16 September 2005, Urszula (Sula) Rayska, Telford Development Corporation Archivist, 1975-1983 – Author's Notes.

⁶⁸ The author.

1992-93: The Three Year Plan

The period started promisingly in 1992 with a corporate and centralised records management function under Moon and her new line manager, David Ludford, Head of Corporate Services. The plans formulated by Field and Moon since 1988 were applied. Moon used her record officers to compile a “Three Year Plan” for tackling records tasks and gaining extra resources, and pursued the procurement of a centralised records computer system (CORA). In August 1992, Ludford informed all heads of service and executive officers that CNT was aiming to create a computerised central index of current and archived files to give “an overall picture of the records in existence”. He was anxious to head off opposition from his colleagues by reassuring them that he was not “recommending central control over files in a physical sense.....physical control of the files will be left with the various Services and E.O.s...”.⁷⁰

This accorded with the decentralised culture which had operated at Glen House for some years, but did not reflect the physical registry culture that existed in varying degrees in town offices, or Moon’s verbal directive to David Biggs after his appointment in 1992 to expand the physical central registry at Milton Keynes. Moon also convened a meeting of records officers with herself and Ludford in September 1992 to discuss matters of common interest. This was the first gathering of what became a standing committee that met regularly until 1999 – the Records Management Meeting (RMM).

However, organisational change soon impacted on the records management function. Moon did not return to work from sick leave in late 1992. In Spring 1993 Ludford decided that as Biggs was the only employee with an archive/records management qualification, he be appointed Principal Records Manager and DRO, to co-ordinate the corporate activity of the other officers in addition to responsibility for Milton Keynes. Biggs set about establishing his corporate role, but did so with limited status, background knowledge of CNT, access to information, and resources. He found no active PRO liaison since 1990 and instigated contact to establish his DRO role and PRO expectations.⁷¹ However, almost immediately, organisational restructuring regionalised records work, and ended the “Three Year Plan”, by withdrawing promised resources, and the corporate approach.

1993-94: Re-structuring

CNT’s records management was badly served by a consultant’s report on restructuring in 1993, designed to cut staff across CNT in preparation for the split into Land and 1998 agencies from

⁶⁹ Unless otherwise specified, information and quotations in this section are taken from CNT Records file: 30/1/1/2 “Records - General and Policy - Records Management - Records Management Meeting”, 1992-1998, EP Records Centre.

⁷⁰ CNT Glen House: AG 21.

⁷¹ The main PRO contacts from 1993 to 1998 were Kelvin Smith as Principal Inspection and Documentation Officer (PIDO) and Mrs Sharon Orton as IDO. Frank McCall was IDO, 1998-2000. CNT Records: 30/1/3/1.

April 1994, and to regionalise staff. The North Office registry was used as the basis for criticising physical registries generally, despite the report's acknowledgement that the Milton Keynes registry worked well. Records staff were denied opportunity to challenge factual inaccuracies or to discuss implications prior to management's acceptance of the report.

The records management function was placed in the 1998 Agency, with officers reporting locally, and only the DRO retaining a secondary, corporate, reporting line to the Director of Personnel and Management Services (DPMS). Management had no plans for Records beyond cutting and regionalising posts to fit the overall staff plan. Biggs pointed out that extant services at Milton Keynes could not physically continue, and devised a pragmatic way forward. Current registry services were decentralised whilst retaining intellectual control. Registry staff were relocated to the Stacey Bushes Records Centre to be near the bulk of records. A network of departmental contacts, called "records liaison officers" (RLOs), was created to help implement policy and practice. The other records management sections followed this lead, although Warrington and Telford exercised minimal control of current filing, and Glen House none.

In 1994 two factory units adjacent to the existing main unit became available to lease at Stacey Bushes. The opportunity was taken to dispose of the 'overspill' unit across the road from the main unit and transfer its MKDC contents to one of the new units. The second available unit was taken to transfer records from BDM commercial storage, to receive records from CNT Basildon Office which was closing, and to receive all future consignments from Glen House. Technically, these London-based records were the responsibility of Glen House Records staff, but it soon became apparent that most work fell on Stacey Bushes staff. BDM records were re-boxed and shelved, with lists raised to appropriate standards in the long-term in conjunction with review of box contents. There were difficulties and delays for two years in creating space at Stacey Bushes to receive all these records because the number involved proved far greater than Glen House Records had estimated.

1996: Rationalisation of Records Management at Central, South and Headquarters

CNT prepared for 1998 by closing Glen House Records and relocating the work and staff posts to Milton Keynes. It was a logical step following the relocation there of BDM records and Glen House closed records since 1994, and corporate senior management thought that the Milton Keynes section under the DRO could offer a direct and proactive service to London staff.

Central Office administered records centre storage and review of closed records of Central, South and Headquarters offices until 1998. Intellectual registry services were applied to Glen House for the first time. A review programme was agreed with the PRO, but by the end of 1996 the DRO again had to focus on reorganisation. Lack of space was a constant problem at Stacey Bushes with pressure of incoming records from 1994 until two additional units were acquired in 1997, and there were insufficient staff to deal with all areas of work needing attention.

1998: Re-organisation

Early concerns that CNT would be replaced by a different legal entity in 1998, thus affecting its public records status and records management operations, proved unfounded. As CNT's role from 1998 was announced, it was a measure of the success of the section at Milton Keynes that it was decided that records management would be a corporate function based at Stacey Bushes, and that closed records would not be stored locally. From July 1997 to March 1998 the Telford and Warrington teams concentrated on consigning closed records from their repositories to Stacey Bushes.

Biggs proposed that the two experienced records officers at Telford and Warrington, Rae Green and Noreen Martin, be appointed as full-time Records Liaison Officers.⁷² They were to assist with the implementation of the new classification system, and co-ordinate consignments and loans and returns between their offices and Stacey Bushes. He expected them to come under his direct management so he could control this work, but they were given a regional reporting line.⁷³ The Telford post – soon renamed Records and Administration Officer because it also involved a facilities management role – seemed in practice to report to the “lead director” for that office.⁷⁴ The DRO's inability to centrally control records activity therefore continued. The records management computer system was updated to reflect the changes in records management operations and to accommodate the data of UDCs and HATs. Known to Records staff as “CORA 2”, it was specified in 1997-98, and installed in April 1998. Deeds management uniformly became a Records' responsibility when northern deeds came under Martin at Warrington in April 1998. A Lotus Notes-based Deeds Management System (DMS) was installed in October 1998.

4.4 NEW CHALLENGE: THE URBAN REGENERATION INHERITANCE, 1998 ONWARDS

1998: Transfer of eight Urban Development Corporations⁷⁵

The records management function was unable to concentrate on completion of new town record tasks, as it was actively involved from early 1997 in preparations for the transfer of the eight remaining urban development corporations (UDCs) in April 1998. However, this new workload was a major reason for extending the life of CNT which allowed work on new town records to continue. It is unknown what would have happened to remaining new town assets and liabilities, such as records, if CNT had closed in 1998.

⁷² Noreen Martin was the senior records employee at Warrington from 1994 after Burke left.

⁷³ Assistant Director of Finance and Administration (West Midlands and North) (1998-2002). Author's Knowledge.

⁷⁴ The two Land Sales directors at Telford and Warrington were designated “lead directors” for their offices. Author's Knowledge.

⁷⁵ Information in this section is taken from CNT Records files: 30/1/8/1-9, “Records – General and Policy – Urban Development Corporations” [9 individual files], 1992-1998, EP Records Centre.

Biggs produced records management guidelines for the UDCs, visited their offices to assess record holdings and actively liaised with them for organised transfers ahead of closure. The record systems inherited were diverse and of differing standards, and against Biggs's advice, current UDC records were transferred direct into CNT departments at all sites. Additionally, the extension and fitting-out at Stacey Bushes to accommodate the new workload had to be managed. This extra space allowed CNT to end its commercial storage at TWAS after ten years.

1999 January: Transfer of North Hull Housing Action Trust⁷⁶

No sooner were UDC records incorporated within the records centre, than preparations had to be made for taking the records of the six housing action trusts (HATs). There was active liaison with North Hull for handover in 1999. The rest would follow in the early 2000s. The UDC and HAT workloads were in keeping with CNT's traditional remit of taking over new town corporations. The organisations and their records were similar to corporations. CNT was also, for the first time, able to tackle this process with the benefit of its own formal and professional records management function in place specifically to address the records aspects of transfer.

This work was done in parallel with inducting a set of new Records staff into CNT, and the vast undertaking of rolling-out centralised record-keeping and an organisation-wide registry classification system across the new-style CNT. However, with executive management support, a full establishment and a centralised dedicated function, records management finally appeared on track, with successful achievement of objectives in sight.

1999 May: Merger with the Urban Regeneration Agency⁷⁷

This happy prospect for records management was soon upset by the merger with the Urban Regeneration Agency (URA). This recreated a struggle for recognition which had been hard fought and won in CNT. The new body was dominated by URA executives unfamiliar with formal records management. The function created by CNT proved strong enough to survive, but had to re-evaluate its procedures and strategies, and re-establish its value to a new audience. This was done firstly by offering storage for URA records removed from unmanned stores and cluttered offices, providing an efficient retrieval service, and by extending the network of RLOs and champions across the merged organisation. Then the new classification system was to be overhauled to cover the combined CNT and URA work. No extra staffing or storage space were provided for performing the URA workload. The URA was not a public record body, so in 2000 a memorandum of understanding was signed with the PRO that URA records would be treated as

⁷⁶ Information in this section is taken from CNT Records: 30/1/22; Author's Knowledge. North Hull HAT transferred operations to CNT on 1 January 1999 and closed 1 March 1999.

⁷⁷ Information in this section is taken from CNT Post-1998 Records Management file: 105/1/1/15, "Records Management – General and Policy – EP Merger 1999-2000: Records Issues", 1999-2000, EP Records Centre; Author's Knowledge.

public records. This gave consistency with CNT, and, as “English Partnerships” (EP) had no legal status, avoided difficulties arising from the records created by the combined body.

The merger had some positive side-effects for Records. Staff cuts removed the two regionalised posts at Telford and Warrington, allowing full centralisation at Stacey Bushes by 2002, with transfer of all deeds and closed records, and direct liaison with departmental “records liaison officers” (RLOs) about current records. Green at Telford maintained a link as a departmental RLO, whilst Martin at Warrington avoided redundancy by taking the new post of Electronic Records Manager, reporting directly to the DRO, and tackling the challenge of the Government’s target for electronic record-keeping.

However, Records had to work in the organisational context of prolonged harmonisation of terms and conditions, several major restructurings, fluid reporting lines, a large exodus of (mainly CNT) staff, high turnover in new staff, and heavy reliance on temporaries and consultants. Specifically, Records was affected by a recruitment freeze on its posts from 2001, with vacancies at fifty per cent by 2004, although expected to cope with the information access regime from 1998 and the modernising government agenda for electronic records management.⁷⁸ This challenging situation repeated issues previously faced and overcome in the new towns. The consequences of the 1999 merger, coming after all the developments from 1965 to 1998, encapsulate and emphasise the vulnerability of records management to organisational change.

4.5 SUMMARY

This chapter has presented an analytical overview of how records management was implemented and developed in the new towns case study, through four decades. This has shown four clear phases. The pre-1965 phase, which this thesis does not cover in detail, was one of non-records management in the new town bodies beyond routine records-creation and filing activity, with negligible attention to retention and disposal issues. The second phase of 1965-1984, instigated by the Peter Walne initiative, was dominated by whether CNT would receive public records status, and, pending this outcome, the approach to records management differed little to pre-1965 although issues and problems, such as lack of storage space, increased in all the organisations. The phase closed with renewed focus on record issues via the ACA/NTA report. The third phase, 1984-1992, occurred when CNT had received public record status. CNT gradually developed records management policy and greater consideration of records matters in its response to closure of remaining corporations. Of these, Telford and Milton Keynes, had developed recognisable

⁷⁸ UK *Data Protection Act 1998*, Ch 29, London, TSO, 1998; UK *Freedom Of Information Act 2000*, Ch 36, London, TSO, 2000; UK *Human Rights Act 1998*, Ch 42, London, TSO, 1998; SI 2004 No 3391, *The Environmental Information Regulations 2004*, London, TSO, 2004; UK The Prime Minister, *Modernising Government, Presented to Parliament by the Prime Minister and the Minister for the Cabinet Office by Command of Her Majesty, March 1999*, London, TSO, 1999, (Cm 4310).

records management following the ACA/NTA initiative. The fourth phase, from 1992, saw the application of formal and professional records management at CNT and to its inherited records.

The overview has highlighted the pivotal influence of legislation (the Public Records Acts) in introducing and supporting formal records management; the key role of individual personalities in instigating, promoting and maintaining records management, or conversely in blocking, hampering or damaging its development; the difference made by professional records management; and the exposure and vulnerability of records management (professional or otherwise) to organisational change in its many guises. Above all, it demonstrates the repetitive and on-going nature, and the fundamental impact, of these points and issues. This chapter concludes Part One of the thesis, in which the chronological, descriptive and contextual framework of the case study has been explained. In Part Two, the main themes and issues arising from the case study data are explored in detail.

PART TWO:

THE ISSUES OF THE CASE STUDY

CHAPTER 5: THE IMPETUS FOR RECORDS MANAGEMENT

The issues underlying the legal and organisational difficulties in managing the new town records have been illustrated above in the Chapter 4 overview. This chapter demonstrates the requirement for records management in the corporations and CNT, whether and when this was recognised, and analyses where and why it emerged. The research data suggested several influencing factors in the development of records management:

- Organisational requirements for formalised record-keeping.
- Storage space requirements for old records, and pressure to dispose.
- The effect of changing technology on office practices and records.¹
- The influence or intervention of outside bodies or individuals, records management standards and theories.
- Compliance with legislative requirements.

The key activities and issues that created, or contributed to the emergence of, formal records management in the case study, are identified in this chapter. The solutions applied by CNT's formal records management function from 1992 are examined in Chapters 6 and 7.

Organisational change may be considered an omni-present impetus for records management, and features in the topics discussed in this chapter. However, as organisational change occurs regardless of formal records management, its effects (before and after formal records management existed in the case study), are detailed in Chapter 8.

5.1 RECORD-KEEPING

From the outset of the new towns movement, the *theoretical* importance of record-keeping and the historic value of records were recognised. The Reith Report in 1946 recommended that the new town agency “should arrange from the start for the orderly preservation and indexing of documents relating to the growth of the town” and that “a room, possibly in the public library, should be allocated for the purpose”.² Official handbooks, however, offered no direct records or archives guidance.³ In practice, the stimulus for record-keeping came not from legislation, best practice, or interest in historical research, but from operational and practical necessity.

¹ Automation, in the context of implementing and resourcing records management is examined in chapter 6.4.

² The Reith Report, paragraph 200, as referred to in “Records of Development Corporations of New Towns”, Report of Joint Working Party Association of County Archivists and New Towns Association, 27 September 1982, in CNT Glen House: N22/5.

³ Commission for the New Towns, “Manual of Policy and Practice”, London, 1966 [binder of instructions, with revision inserts to 1986]; Ministry of Housing and Local Government, “Handbook for New Town Corporations”, London, [binder of instructions, 1969, with revision inserts to 1980].

A records function was recognised in several corporations. Bracknell Development Corporation (1949) decided early (1950) to recruit a 'Head Record Keeper'. The post remained on the establishment until closure in 1982, with two assistants.⁴ In 1969 a new towns careers booklet specifically referred to "records" as an administrative department matter.⁵ Some corporations designated filing clerks, but generally filing fell to secretaries and administrative assistants.⁶ For example, in CNT Northampton, (a small estates office, 1985-88), coding and filing was just one of the duties of the Telephonist/Receptionist/Clerk.⁷ When Runcorn Development Corporation's Central Filing clerks retired upon the merger with Warrington's corporation in 1981, the receptionists/telephonists learned records work on the job.⁸

Development of records procedures in a newly-created corporation

Records procedures developed gradually in a growing corporation, as needs dictated. This is exemplified at MKDC (1967).⁹ At inception, the Secretary required that all "white" copies of outgoing correspondence be sent to the Administrative Officer "to serve as information copies and also as a Master File record." The Central Registry existed by May 1968, handling "the filing of all correspondence which is filed by subject". Induction literature in 1970 instructed new staff on correct procedures such as "A file reference should be typed on all correspondence". Registry also handled outgoing mail. Records management alongside postal administration was common UK practice until the 1980s.¹⁰

In 1968 heads of departments were requested to assist regarding "frequent occasions when correspondence comes in relating to a file which is out of Registry and in action. In order to avoid embarrassment, if not worse, such correspondence will be sent out from the Registry to be put on the file, wherever it is located." In 1970, outgoing letters, except personnel matters, had a copy for the subject file in Registry, and copies for two circulation day files. One day file was subsequently kept in Registry as a master file in date order. Red file covers were introduced for

⁴ Bracknell Development Corporation Minutes, 1949-1982, NT/B/G3/1-45, Berkshire Record Office.

⁵ Kirby, p12.

⁶ Statement based on examination of structure charts. Staffing applied to records management is examined in more detail in Chapter 6.7.

⁷ Interview: 31 August 1995, Janet Hilton, Northampton Development Corporation/CNT employee – Author's Notes.

⁸ Interviews: various dates, Ann Chamberlain, Runcorn Development Corporation/Warrington and Runcorn Development Corporation/CNT employee – Author's Notes; Runcorn Development Corporation file: "Establishment/Manning Situation", 1979-1981, NTW 146/3, Cheshire Record Office.

⁹ Milton Keynes Development Corporation file: 1/15/1, "Administration – Internal Administration – Office Procedures and Circulars", 1967-1970, consignment 546/88/1, EP Records Centre.

¹⁰ Confusingly, CNT Glen House post-room retained the name "Registry" after central filing ceased and after creation of a records management unit. In the new towns, professional records management never controlled post-room activity. Author's Knowledge.

board papers. Procedures for marking and passing confidential correspondence were introduced, and chief officers experimented with “Morning Mail Meetings” to examine correspondence.¹¹

As MKDC expanded, departments developed individual practices. In 1969 Architecture and Planning registered and coded incoming and outgoing correspondence, although Registry controlled referencing. Attempts to operate independently of Registry were initially resisted. The Secretary told the Chief Estates Officer in 1969 to ensure that all the 42(1) Applications and Ministry approvals reached Registry for filing. However, he later acceded to the Chief Estates Officer’s wish to retain original approvals. In 1970 the Secretary conceded that the Chief Finance Officer, whilst making a copy for Registry, could make copies of section 42(1) and 6(1) approvals for internal purposes. The Chief Architect instructed his staff to ensure all originals went to Registry, keeping only copies in the department.¹²

Records and information were thus controlled by the Administration function, and records work comprised registration and filing. There appeared to be no concern about long-term storage, or retention and disposal in the young organisation. No legislative requirements, such as Public Records Acts, needed consideration. When the corporation decided to appoint an information specialist, it employed a “Librarian”, not an “Archivist”, introducing a reference library in 1969. By 1970 “prints of all Corporation photographs should be passed (with a description on the back)” to the Library to classify, whilst negatives would be kept by the Visual Presentation Group and a cross-reference system arranged with the Library. “Any Department requiring photographs to be taken for the Corporation’s records should contact the Visual Presentation Group and ensure that the prints are later passed to the Library.” Departments were to transfer negatives and prints to the Public Relations Officer, for selection, with subject details, date taken, and name of photographer. A central enquiry desk was introduced as demand for Library services increased.¹³

Telford was unusual in appointing an Archivist in 1975 to join its Librarian and Filing Assistant under the Corporation Secretary, in response to a speculative approach from a professionally-qualified archivist. Sula Rayska attributed her appointment to the General Manager’s interest in history and in outdoing MKDC.¹⁴ She had freedom to create her own role, researching historical information to support and inform development work, ensuring historical documents and deeds were brought together alongside the Filing Assistant’s Muniment Room, and helping the Ironbridge Gorge Trust catalogue its collections. Although she weeded selected archival files, there was no records management programme proper until 1983, under her successor. The ACA/NTA working party era of 1981-83 also saw Redditch’s technical Librarian, Ken Small,

¹¹ MKDC: 1/15/1.

¹² MKDC: 1/15/1.

¹³ MKDC: 1/15/1.

¹⁴ Interview: Rayska.

become Librarian/Archivist to prepare his corporation's records for closure, whilst several other corporations entered into discussions with local archivists.¹⁵

Central Registries

It was normal for corporations from the 1940s to the 1960s to establish a registry at creation. True centralisation, with different departments filing onto the same subject file, was possible in small organisations but impractical as size and workload increased. Different files for various functions emerged. Some duplication resulted. These multiple files were often held within a central registry, but pressure arose from some staff to physically store them locally. Departmental systems developed and co-existed with central registries from an early date. Whereas central registries brought corporate organisation, departmental systems reflected individuals' attitudes, record-keeping abilities, and resources.

Registry staff received operational advice. MKDC used "Registry services" guidance from Management Services of the Civil Service Department (1969, 1973), and in 1992 still had a reprint of *Filing and Filing Systems*, a 1972 report of London Boroughs' Management Services Unit.¹⁶ A CNT records clerk at Warrington in 1992 described typical registry activity as: sorting incoming correspondence; deciding and allocating references for unreferenced correspondence; placing on file; making new file parts; opening new files and deciding appropriate theme title and number; dividing or merging files into new files when necessary; reorganising systems as required; maintaining finding aids, such as index cards and file labels; locating requested files; booking out files on loan; booking in returned files and placing any accrued filing on them; delivery and collection of files to and from departments; moving files into closed stores/archive and retrieving on request; locating misplaced files; searching for specific information on files; photocopying; destructions; maintaining lists of records handed to other bodies; covering for absent colleagues.¹⁷

Hemel Hempstead filing of 1964 bears a stamp showing the officers to whom the paper was sent 'for action', then 'to note', then 'Registry' for 'file'. Documents from 1958 to 1982 bear 'received in registry' stamps.¹⁸ Runcorn (1964) papers were stamped with 'The Property of

¹⁵ Redditch Development Corporation: "Redditch Development Corporation, General Manager's Report, Reorganisation of the Corporation's Establishment, October 1981", 1981, Acc 10300/89 (iii), Worcestershire Record Office.

¹⁶ In CNT Records file: 30/2/1/1, "Records – Office Administration – Central Registry – General", 1992-1998, EP Records Centre.

¹⁷ CNT Records: 30/2/1/1. The clerk, Ann Chamberlain, worked with records at WRDC, CNT and English Partnerships from the 1980s into the 2000s.

¹⁸ Hemel Hempstead Development Corporation/CNT file: 01/1/1, "Historical. Coat of Arms and Seal", 1949-1978, CNT/HH Box 210, MISC72, Hertfordshire Record Office; Hertfordshire Record Office: Hemel Hempstead Development Corporation: I/3; CNT Hemel Hempstead: 01/5/13.

Central Filing' and the 'Central File No.'. ¹⁹ File covers recorded information. Early Milton Keynes covers were printed with columns for 'Attention' and 'Date' which allowed them to be brought forward, with the enjoinder "Please Do Not Retain This File Unnecessarily". ²⁰ Dawley Development Corporation (1964) acquisition file covers recorded file number, name and address of subject of acquisition, cover dates and reference, with related references. ²¹ Inside were sheets recording control to individual paper level. It instructed that "The File will NOT be accepted back for filing unless it is initialled as dealt with in column 4".

Dawley filing culture transferred to the enlarged and renamed Telford in 1968. The "Development Corporation Central File Index" was well-presented, with explanatory notes including:

"Please use file references for all correspondence – if you are in doubt as to the correct file, telephone the filing office (Extension 218) and ask." ²²

Numbers could only be allocated, and files issued, extinguished, merged or altered "in any way" by Central Registry staff, and files "are continually being checked and pruned". A detailed "Amendment List No. 1" of 1970 showed file additions and deletions and changes to titles.

Most registries used printed location cards to track loans, and maintained card indices for reference and subject searches. Some files could be re-opened. The Hemel Hempstead Development Corporation file regarding armorial bearings originally only held correspondence for 1949, but was re-activated in 1963 for CNT's armorial application and filed upon until 1978. The file was thus 'live' – albeit intermittently – through two organisations and twenty nine years. ²³

Registries worked well. Credibility emerged from the diligence and aptitude of staff, influenced by supervisory matriarchs with forceful personalities and authority gained through long-service and experience. Interviewees remembered them with respect. Some were addressed formally by their staff. ²⁴

Classification Systems

Allocating structured and unique identifying references to records was standard registry practice. The former Administrative Officer at Corby Development Corporation and CNT Office, Peter

¹⁹ For example, Runcorn Development Corporation file: 3/2/05, "Industry – Sites – Ready Mixed Concrete Plant", 1965-1970, consignment 1862/11/2, EP Records Centre.

²⁰ MKDC: 1/15/1.

²¹ Dawley/Telford Development Corporation Acquisition files: D/5/1 and D/5/11, consignment Telford Box Number 138/9, EP Records Centre.

²² Telford Development Corporation file: "Telford Development Corporation Central File Index", 1970-1988, EP Records Centre.

²³ Hertfordshire RO: Hemel Hempstead DC/CNT: 01/1/1.

Lane, attributed Corby's referencing to military discipline: "No doubt as a result of his military career, after Brig. Hamilton became General Manager, he insisted that any plan the subject of a decision at a Board meeting should bear a reference number which was to be quoted in the relevant Board Minute. A copy of the plan etc. was kept for reference and comparison if need be at future occasions should the same topic be discussed again by the Corporation."²⁵

All new town registry files used numeric or alpha-numeric systems of, largely, functional themes, sub-divided by subject. For instance, Stevenage acquisition files were prefixed "ACQ" followed by a running number.²⁶ Similarities between towns were accidental, rather than co-ordinated, such as use of the same theme number for a subject (theme '8' represented 'Industry' at Skelmersdale and 'Housing' at Washington).²⁷ Co-ordination might have assisted transfer of records to a single residuary body, but this was not considered.

Referencing systems changed over time. Corby Development Corporation (1950) early files had simple consecutive numbers and Roman numerals in brackets, or alphabetic suffixes for sub-files of a topic. The file index supplied to the County Archivist of Northamptonshire in 1978 was organised by alphabetic prefix. Probably, the files had been re-organised by subject in the early 1960s as too many files had accrued for a consecutive number system.²⁸ The earliest Hemel Hempstead referencing system consisted of a number or number and letters, prefixed by a Roman numeral reflecting category (for example: VIII JQ 524 Fire Station – Alexandra Road). Later, files were referenced with Arabic numerals only, and current files were re-numbered to conform. A third, subject-box system was applied to files and plans remotely stored. The files transferred to Hertfordshire Record Office in 1982 came from all three periods, but mainly the third subject-box system. Any files received without reference were inserted into this system by Hertfordshire and folders of plans were placed with related files rather than into the remote storage plan folder class. In effect this created a fourth – archival – filing period.²⁹

Usually CNT offices continued corporation referencing, without thought to organisational or archival provenance. CNT Central Lancashire was unusual in opening new files and references

²⁴ Interviews: various dates, Maureen Boundy, Rae Green and Noreen Martin, new town employees – Author's Notes.

²⁵ "Corby Development Corporation Records and Archives Volume 2 - Drawings - Tube Nos. 1-108", 1986, Tube Nos 33/34/35/36, Board Approved Papers, np, Northamptonshire Record Office. Brigadier Hugh G W Hamilton (1918-2005) Corby Development Corporation General Manager. (1968-80). *Who's Who*, 2005, p942; *Who's Who*, 2006, p12.

²⁶ CNT Glen House file: "Stevenage", 1982-1989, EP Records Centre.

²⁷ Washington Central Registry Index, Themes 1-19, (8 vols), nd [1964-1988], consignment 4454/1/1-8, EP Records Centre.

²⁸ Northamptonshire RO: Box File, "Current File Index Corby".

²⁹ Hertfordshire Record Office catalogue: "Hertfordshire Record Office - Hemel Hempstead Development Corporation, Commission For The New Towns - Preliminary List [CNT/HH]", 1983.

from 1986.³⁰ Sometimes, new systems were created for new activities. A year after CNT Northampton Office was created, a system of “E.O.C.” for Executive Officer Commercial was established to cover his role outside of the Northampton Office.³¹

The benefits of referencing were recognised, so even some later organisations, without dedicated registries, used it. The Administrative Officer at Tyne and Wear Urban Development Corporation in the 1980s and 1990s kept a central index of files. The main office files used numeric themes 1-18, and the sub-office used numeric themes prefixed BH (Bridge House).³²

Departmental record-keeping

Even in organisations with registry cultures, records that were not files were typically created and kept elsewhere. Deeds were referenced and kept in strongrooms. Drawings and plans remained in drawing offices and departments, although systematised with numbers. Skelmersdale drawing records were held on microfilm and controlled by a technical library. Departmental records did not always have finding aids. For instance, in 1982 there was an attempt to identify the Redditch Development Corporation architectural models (some of which were on display in schools and a library) in order to formulate a disposal policy.³³ In 1990 Peter Lane complained that Washington architects and planning drawings needed listing to enable review.³⁴

Departmental systems increased duplication of information and encouraged insular and parochial attitudes, leading staff to believe that they were exempt from corporate records management controls. A CNT marketing officer at Warrington in 1998 said “Generally, we do not keep any material that would need to go to records. Any records/files are only job files which we keep for several years only as reference.”³⁵ During CNT Washington Office’s closure, Peter Lane discovered that the Planning Department kept its “own mini filing system outside and separate from the central registry. Almost certainly this will prove to be the case with other departments. I have stressed the importance of locating all the file lists possible so that we can know what there has been in the past and to decide if any of the files constitute important records and worth retaining.”³⁶

Departmental filing areas were only as good as the many people (for whom filing was just one of several tasks) running and using them. The attention and consistency provided by central registry and the single point of responsibility and authority in the supervisor were absent. The results,

³⁰ CNT Records file: 30/3/3/2, “Records – Departmental – North (Warrington) – Records Section”, 1992-1998, EP Records Centre.

³¹ CNT Records: 30/4/12; Northamptonshire RO: Box File, “Northampton Development Corporation file lists”.

³² CNT Records file: 30/1/8/9, “Records – General and Policy – Urban Development Corporations – Tyne and Wear”, 1992-1998, EP Records Centre.

³³ Worcestershire RO: Acc 10300/792 (ii).

³⁴ CNT Records file: 30/4/21, “Records – Towns – Washington”, 1992-1998, EP Records Centre.

³⁵ CNT Records: 30/3/3/2.

observed by David Biggs in 1992, were poor titling, misfiling, loose papers, over-filled and badly maintained covers, and absence of tracking systems.³⁷ This prevented, or undermined, registry culture, and showed insufficient recognition by the business of the order, structure and accuracy that central control offered. Overall, filing was perceived as a low priority, existed outside of a wider records and information management context, and was undervalued by contemporary decision-makers. Consequently, decentralisation of registries appealed to departmental empire-builders, and corporate job-cutters.

Decentralisation of registries

Conflicting views regarding the merits of centralisation and decentralisation existed at the heart of central government when the first corporations formed. A Treasury report of 1945 recommended that registries should be decentralised.³⁸ In expanding corporations with many sub-offices located across towns, and multi-disciplinary project-based teams, it was difficult to maintain traditional central control of records. Increasingly from the 1970s, old-school staff, who might be expected to support registries, retired. Decentralisation became popular in the 1970s and 1980s, as office practices and layouts, and management structures, repeatedly changed. Some registry practices survived. Copying papers around the office at CNT North in the 1990s continued from CNT Skelmersdale Office where Director North originated.³⁹

Decentralising systems, often occurring as part of wider organisational change, could profoundly affect basic record-keeping.⁴⁰ MKDC's original central registry was decentralised in 1976, which had "created all kinds of problems" by 1983.⁴¹ Four directorates used a registry in MKDC's new Saxon Court headquarters in 1983, but by 1988 this had been halved in size by decentralisation, and through to closure in 1992 it mainly served the Commerce directorate. Commerce filing was done by two staff who booked files in and out and maintained a bring-forward system.⁴² Formal central filing systems were run within the Engineering and Design and Development offices, whilst elsewhere sections or individual staff kept files relating to their specific work. MKDC found that by the early 1980s "as a result of several reorganisations there is no central control of the documents and inevitably a number of different filing systems have evolved and there is considerable duplication; therefore it will be necessary to establish what files, drawings, etc exist in each department before any further work can proceed."⁴³ This assessment, made as part of management discussions for identifying archival material from departmental records, did not

³⁶ CNT Records: 30/4/21.

³⁷ Author's Knowledge.

³⁸ John Simpson, "These Valuable Treasures", *Records Management Bulletin*, no 31, April 1989, pp9-13.

³⁹ CNT Records: 30/3/3/2.

⁴⁰ See also discussion of decentralisation at Warrington and Runcorn in Chapter 8.3, Mergers and Acquisitions.

⁴¹ MKDC: 1/15/4/1.

⁴² CNT Records: 30/2/1/1.

⁴³ CNT Records file: 30/4/11, "Records – Towns – Milton Keynes", 1992-1998, EP Records Centre.

consider improving file-creation. The opportunity to control both ends of the records life cycle was missed.

Change – particularly decentralisation – was detrimental to record-keeping in new town organisations because no central systems or controls existed to manage the effects. Local offices or departments moved files, split, merged, re-referenced, and continued filing on them. When Northampton estates management transferred to CNT Redditch Office in 1989, staff renumbered files received (variously referenced as IND, SH, OF, LEA, EAS, MAN, MIS, EDU and ADM) as NH/M/1 through to NH/M/70.⁴⁴ Context, provenance and archival selection considerations were ignored even by staff involved in records issues. Brian Webb, Principal Administrative Officer in CNT's Directorate of Estate and Technical Services at Glen House, continued to file records matters onto his file from the closed Welwyn Office after 1982.⁴⁵ The Principal Legal Officer at CNT Peterborough Office took a records-related file with him to Glen House in 1992. He continued filing on it till he left in 1994, but with papers unrelated to the title.⁴⁶ This typified Glen House filing in the 1990s, resulting from individual 'ownership' of files, closures of local offices and corporate departments, creation of the multi-disciplinary South Office, and lack of guidance and controls by local Records staff.

CNT's record-keeping practice

CNT's file-keeping history before 1992 echoed that of corporations, resulting in self-created and inherited problems. It was an inefficient way for a residuary body to manage current records. There was no overview, strategy, or uniform practice. Files in town offices had their own, or continued corporation, systems. Corporation registries existing at point of transfer were retained by CNT in towns where it established offices. This seemed natural, but was short-term, and neither took account of CNT as a single body nor of long-term records management.

CNT did not seek to retain experienced registry staff when a corporation closed. Continuity of records work, unlike some functions, was left to chance. CNT was fortunate at Skelmersdale in 1985 as Registry Assistant Carole Riley and General Clerk Noreen Martin transferred as Filing Room Supervisor and Filing Room Assistant.⁴⁷ Hilary Moon was later reliant on that "excellent and interested filing clerk", Riley, for sorting Skelmersdale Office records.⁴⁸ At MKDC in 1992, one filing clerk wanted to transfer. Without her experience, her newly-appointed colleagues would have struggled to operate the registry.⁴⁹ Staffing considerations for records work were not well considered when CNT closed offices. Washington Development Corporation Registry Clerk

⁴⁴ CNT Records: 30/4/12.

⁴⁵ CNT Glen House file: RE5(a), "Records Transferred to County Archivist HAT/WGC", 1982-1990, EP Records Centre.

⁴⁶ Peterborough Development Corporation/CNT file: 12007, "Transfer of Peterborough Records", 1989-1994, consignment 1334/84/1, EP Records Centre.

⁴⁷ Interviews: Martin.

⁴⁸ CNT Records: 30/1/1/1.

⁴⁹ Author's Knowledge.

Kelly Vasey, employed from 1969, transferred to the CNT Office in 1988, but left with all other clerical staff in 1991. This left the final stages of sorting records in the office close-down to the part-time consultant, Peter Lane, alone, despite his protests to Glen House.⁵⁰

When new town records were first discussed in the 1960s, Glen House records were easily identified and assessed, being small in number, referenced and fully listed. For example, 83/1 equalled 'Preservation of Records', and under that were grouped sub-files such as 83/1/1 for 'Micro Filming – Plans & Drawings'. These references survived until 1985. However, the Hemel Office had a registry excluding engineers and housing, and other offices had departmental systems without complete lists and "with much surplus material (interdepartmental memos)". Howard Austin's report of 1968 concluded that it would take a year to compile or bring file lists up to date if one or two staff in each town office worked on them.⁵¹

The unresolved task was far greater in 1981 when impending centralisation focused CNT's Chief Estates Officer on rationalising various terriers and records:

"Clearly we shall not wish to go to the lowest common denominator but at this stage of the Commission's life we shall not be justified in aiming at a perfect system which might cost a great deal to implement. It goes without saying that we must have a good system of records which is adequate for our needs and I would think that some happy medium on the amount of information stored would be the right course of action here."⁵²

A meeting of senior administrative officers considered five areas: integration of town registries into a central filing system of live records, including space required; storage, weeding and disposal of dead records/archives; storage and disposal of technical records and drawings; secure storage of deeds and legal records; estate records and terriers. In January 1982 the working party decided that "Town files in day-to-day use would need to be re-categorised and numbered for absorption into the Headquarters system". The index would be circulated for administrative officers to consider the "formidable task".⁵³

The centralisation of 1982-83 never truly created a CNT-wide registry system, because it omitted Corby Office, and when more offices were created for transferring towns from 1985, CNT adopted previous practice of continuing local systems. Nor was centralisation enforced or long-lasting at Glen House. It was the era of decentralisation, but also no system was developed and maintained that managed an expanding workload. The pre-1982 files were renumbered into alphabetic and alpha-numeric systems, (for example, 83/1 became N22/2) but two years later a new 'Central Filing System (Administration)' list was created, numbering files as A1 to A202

⁵⁰ TWAS: 38/2.

⁵¹ CNT Glen House: N22/2.

⁵² CNT Hemel Hempstead: 01/5/13.

⁵³ CNT Hemel Hempstead: 01/5/13.

and showing their previous 'N' number.⁵⁴ Some staff continued to use the 'N' series for a while and the final papers in the N22 records management files were dated 1988. The systems became confused. By 1987-88 individual departments, sections and staff chose how files were created, maintained, and referenced (or not) and existing files were dispersed, cannibalised, and re-referenced. In 1989 the Directorate of Estate and Technical Services, was using fourteen separate file lists. New departments or functions lacked impetus to create systems, and this continued post-1992 at Glen House without registry culture and proactive records management. Corporate Services, which ran from 1992 until 1995, did not use references despite its director's responsibility for records management.⁵⁵

Whilst recognising the problems that diverse and uncontrolled current record practices in corporations and CNT had caused CNT in identifying records, Les Field in 1990 felt reintroduction of central registry at Glen House was unviable because it would be staff-intensive, prevent immediate staff access to "their own records", and necessitate unpopular controls. Instead, he advocated "indirect control through computer registration of all new file titles as they are created". A central database controlled by the Records Assistant would hold this "file register", with terminals in departments. File creation guidelines would be issued to staff. Users would request labelled covers from the Records Assistant. Existing file series numbers would be used with a computer prefix. Existing records would be added for a complete computerised record of holdings.⁵⁶

Failure to exercise central control meant that by 1992 Glen House record-keeping was worse than in those town offices which had continued corporation registry practices. The Milton Keynes Records Section attempted to bring order to Glen House in 1996, but the return of central registration and introduction of CNT-wide classification had to wait until the major re-organisation of 1998.

The effect of poor record-keeping

An organisational and long-term strategic overview of record-keeping was difficult when departmental staff were generally interested only in current matters and disinterested in old records. Staff could work, however inefficiently, without referencing systems or file covers, with overly fat files, and bundles of disorganised papers. It might look bad, be poor use of space and time, and conflict with health and safety guidance and clear-desk policies, but staff could function day-to-day and individually without penalty. Poor record-keeping would only visibly impact if there was comeback from litigation or claim, a failed deal, criticism from sponsor or other ministry, National Audit Office, or bad publicity.

⁵⁴ CNT Glen House file: CSR/4/5, "File Index Registry", nd [1970s-1980s], EP Records Centre.

⁵⁵ CNT Records file: 30/3/1/3, "Records – Departmental – Corporate – Records Section", 1992-1998, EP Records Centre; CNT Records file: 30/3/1/1, "Records – Departmental – Corporate – General", 1992-1998, EP Records Centre.

⁵⁶ CNT Records: 30/1/1/1.

Poor record-keeping affected the successor body's understanding and continuation of inherited business. In 1971 CNT Secretary Frank Schaffer expressed the hope that corporations would always have filing measures which facilitated preservation, so that CNT did not inherit miscellaneous and disordered papers. In 1975 CNT's Chief Architect said that whoever inherited corporation assets "will be greatly assisted by good records, especially where they do not inherit long-serving members of staff with good memories". However, in 1990 Les Field noted that there were many and varied indexing systems causing "considerable difficulty in identifying these records", especially where no staff knowledge transferred to CNT.⁵⁷ Poor record-keeping presented a major problem for staff, within the organisation or successor body, who had to review and select from closed files. This was the case for MKDC Archives in 1986-92 and for CNT Records meeting public records requirements in the 1990s.

Poor record-keeping created a situation that would benefit from records management, but did not in itself initiate it. Where centralised control of filing visibly worked better than decentralised systems, staff were willing to co-operate and participate. This process, championed by Milton Keynes Records from 1992, enabled resurrection, rejuvenation and expansion of central registry – intellectually, if not physically – within a professional records management strategy at CNT in the 1990s. This is examined in Chapter 6.

5.2 RECORDS STORAGE AND DISPOSAL

Organisations frequently retain records beyond current use for accountability requirements and historical reference. However, without retention/disposition systems, records are kept through reluctance to take responsibility for disposal, and a hoarding instinct. This risks uncontrolled disposal without consideration of business or historic value.

When and where did lack of storage space become a problem?

Central government undertook no systematised review and disposal when the first corporations were established. Escalating filing cabinet storage costs, amongst other issues, led to the establishment of the Grigg Committee in 1952 to examine preservation and destruction of departmental records, producing a review system for UK public records.⁵⁸ But new towns were not subject to the Public Records Acts. Anyway, there was little practical governmental advice about records management until the Cabinet Office issued guidance in 1985-88.⁵⁹ The case study organisations did not address retention and disposal provided sufficient storage space existed. In the 1960s, records of the first four corporations to close were transferred to CNT entirely, and on site. In 1986 Basildon left nearly all its records, dating from 1949, for CNT. These records only

⁵⁷ CNT Records: 30/1/1/1.

⁵⁸ Sir (Percy) James Grigg (1890-1964). *Who Was Who*, 1961-70, p463; UK Committee on Departmental Records, *Report*, London, HMSO, 1954, (Cmd 9163), The Grigg Report.

received dedicated review and disposal when the offices they were held in closed. For the first four towns this occurred in the 1982 centralisation, and at Basildon after the CNT office closed to the public in 1994.

Lack of storage space did prompt discussion about old records. In 1979 Redditch Development Corporation considered reorganisation of its overloaded registry, but, 'dead' files, kept in a cupboard, "could be of interest later especially to an historian so it is probably better not to destroy them".⁶⁰ In CNT many solutions were considered or applied over forty years. The 1965 and 1968 reports stimulated storage considerations and linked space creation and review. The Administrative Officer at Welwyn in 1967 told managers that Headquarters was concerned whether they were "getting their Commission's Offices weighed down with stuff that is 'dead' ". He enquired whether there was a complete list of files held in the department, could dead files be "done away with in 'toto' ", could any files be stripped of unnecessary papers, and was there space for files not in general use to be "stowed away – yet be got at if necessary". The Landscape Architect had kept all plans since 1949, but did "discard all landscape correspondence after seven years". The Chief Estates Officer felt that if housing tenancy papers could be scrapped after two years, the housing offices "could achieve a considerable saving in space", and the storage problem "might be overcome by stipulating that correspondence should only be kept for a pre-determined period and/or by a vigorous pruning of existing files".⁶¹

In the 1960s all Glen House records could be held on site, whilst the volume in local offices was not yet acute. This would have been the ideal time to build on the interest stimulated by the 1965 report, to assist the process of corporation transfers. However, as public record status and associated policy remained unresolved, storage problems gradually accrued, with deposits to record offices in abeyance, and uncontrolled, uncertain, and minimal weeding and destruction. For example, in 1978 Hemel Hempstead Office queried conflicting advice about retention and destruction of redundant files.⁶² By 1982 CNT had no internal space solutions, yet "an enormous volume of files and records remained".⁶³ Even two years after CNT became subject to the Public Records Act, disposal lacked an overall corporate policy and system. In 1986 the Director of Estates and Technical Services decided that a previous instruction to destroy asset sales files a year after completion could both remove evidence that would protect CNT and be interpreted as CNT hiding details. Therefore, he instructed that sales files could not be destroyed for at least six years after completion, and not without his approval.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ John Simpson, pp9-13.

⁶⁰ Redditch Development Corporation file: "Registry File", nd, Acc 10300/125 (iii), Worcestershire Record Office.

⁶¹ CNT Glen House: N22/2.

⁶² CNT Glen House: N22/2.

⁶³ CNT Hemel Hempstead: 01/5/13.

⁶⁴ CNT Corby Office file: AOM1, "Filing Systems – Main Registry Index", 1985-1991, consignment CB 129, EP Records Centre.

What storage solutions were implemented?

Available Spaces and Unmanned Off-Site Stores

Old records were generally disregarded in the case study organisations prior to formal records management. Lack of space typically led to use of corridors, basements, cellars, attics, garages, and sheds within offices or nearby. In 1967 the Chief Engineer at CNT Welwyn Hatfield Office stored files in the loft.⁶⁵ Records were not usually well-packaged or well-identified, and shared storage with furniture, equipment, materials, or even vehicles.

Some stores were organised, but from an administrative rather than professional records management perspective. At Corby (1950) closed files had no title maintained in the current series and were transferred from Registry to the basement Dead File Store. The 'Dead Files List' gave the original file reference, title, covering dates, date closed and the related dead file number (a running numeric reference followed by "c" for "closed").⁶⁶ A list of files closed between 1951 and 1970 formed the basis for disposal lists made by the Administrative Officer in the 1980s.⁶⁷ By 1978, Peterborough Development Corporation (1968) requested that low-use and dormant files be sent from offices to its central files store, it being "in everyone's interest to see that as much material as possible goes to the basement storage area." It explained that "While centrally managed, different departments' files retain their original identification system, and are stored in separate bays in a common area".⁶⁸

Without space within office buildings, records were typically moved to larger off-site stores, such as factory units. Corporations usually controlled premises that were not immediately required for rent or sale. In 1972, after twenty years accumulation, Bracknell Development Corporation established an "Archives/Paper and Stationery Storage Unit" within a multi-storey carpark.⁶⁹ Unmanned stores, visited as necessary, were the furthest most corporations went, and usually sufficed until closure, however inadequate. For example, Warrington and Runcorn Development Corporation used a factory unit "Archive Store" at Howley, which by 1984 had become a "general dumping area for items of furniture, building materials and display material".⁷⁰ When CNT inherited it in 1989 it found it was full, with disorganised and unlisted records, unrestricted and unsupervised access, and borrowed records, if returned, were "left in the most convenient empty space near the entrance".⁷¹ CNT continued or opened similar unmanned facilities in

⁶⁵ CNT Glen House: N22/2.

⁶⁶ Corby Development Corporation/CNT file: "Records & Archival Material", 1991, Box CB 362, Northamptonshire Record Office.

⁶⁷ Northamptonshire RO: Box File, "Dead File Index Corby".

⁶⁸ "Annexe to Office Manual, August 1978", p20, in Peterborough Development Corporation file: "Peterborough Development Corporation Office Manual", 1971-1988, Cambridgeshire Record Office.

⁶⁹ Bracknell DC/CNT: 305-4.

⁷⁰ Warrington and Runcorn Development Corporation file: "Howley Archives", 1984-1987, consignment 2462/7/7, EP Records Centre.

⁷¹ CNT Records file: 30/3/3/1, "Records – Departmental – North (Warrington) – General", 1992-1998, EP Records Centre; CNT Records: 30/3/3/2.

inherited towns (for example at Peterborough and Redditch). The situation was magnified for a residuary body receiving others' records whilst managing its own.

Sweeping unwanted records into unseen storage remained typical in public bodies at closure of the twentieth century. After only six years, URA's old records were kept, disorganised, in its Gateshead Office basement and a factory unit near its Haydock Office. URA representatives in pre-merger talks in 1998-99 expressed surprise that CNT employed records specialists, since their staff looked after their own records.⁷² There was a space impetus for records management in URA, and in fact a CD-ROM programme for finance records had begun in 1997 because of lack of storage space.⁷³ However, the organisation did not officially recognise the issue, and literally stored up future problems, which were only faced when merger with CNT introduced formalised records management.

CNT's "Depository" Solution

At CNT, unwanted corporate records from Glen House had spilled into town offices by the late 1970s. In July 1978 the Chief Architect learnt that the Chief Finance Officer wanted 120 feet of miscellaneous finance records moved to Crawley and told the Chief Administrative Officer that there was no surplus accommodation, and they could only stay temporarily. He complained:

“...we are already tight for room for storage of records and one of the reasons, in fact the main one, is that we were requested at fairly short notice, and certainly long after the completion of the planning stage of the building, to accommodate about 110 ft. run of legal records. I hope that this will prove to be a temporary requirement and that the Chief Legal Officer will soon be able to find alternative accommodation or, failing that, consider whether some at least of these records could be dispensed with.”⁷⁴

By September, records needed moving for the area to be let. There was a “possibility of a smaller amount being retained at Crawley and the rest ‘weeded out’”. There was no set policy or procedure for records storage. When the Chief Architect retired in 1981 he suggested his files and drawings, related to projects in Hatfield, Welwyn Garden City and Hemel Hempstead, remain at Crawley Office.⁷⁵

The solution found was an unmanned “Depository” at Fernville Lane, Hemel Hempstead. The Regional Estates Manager reported in 1978 that it was “well constructed, appears dry, and on the ground floor already contains a good deal of racking” and was “a suitable cheap method of coping with our storage problem”. If obsolete accounts records were destroyed, sufficient storage space might be created without installing a staircase to the first floor. The Chief Finance Officer agreed to investigate as “No doubt as with all records kept by the various departments some can be destroyed”, but added that if the Depository was to serve all three Hertfordshire towns and

⁷² The author was informed by CNT's then Director of Finance and Administration.

⁷³ Author's Knowledge. Compact Disc-Read Only Memory.

⁷⁴ CNT Glen House: N22/2.

Headquarters the first floor would need to be opened up anyway.⁷⁶ The Administrative Officer at Welwyn sent legal records as he needed space at Welwyn to index remaining files.⁷⁷ In 1979 the Chief Finance Officer told the Chief Administrative Officer that old Hemel Hempstead finance records had been moved to the Depository, and “rubbish has been sent to the waste paper mills”. He suggested “that all who use it from now on be informed that they leave it as they find it, tidy.” The Chief Administrative Officer cautioned the Estates Manager, Hemel Hempstead that “a depository can easily get into a state where it is impossible to find anything”.⁷⁸

Fernville seems to have been well-organised with finding aids. Files sent from Glen House in 1980 to 1981 were listed. One list shows files dated between 1961 and 1981 detailing file references, and some in numbered boxes. An undated list of closed files, “to be sent to depository later”, shows references by town, that is, CB for Corby, CR for Crawley, HL for Harlow, HAT for Hatfield, HH for Hemel, SGE for Stevenage, WGC for Welwyn.⁷⁹ The Hemel Administrative Officer had lists prepared in 1980 giving titles, dates, file references, and rack locations within the store, with amendments in 1981.⁸⁰ In contrast, the Manager, Hemel Hempstead complained in 1980:

“Most of the records have been placed on racks in haphazard fashion and only the Finance records were thoroughly sorted when a former member of staff was employed for that purpose.there is an urgent need for the remainder ...to be sorted and catalogued, particularly as the retrieval of information is becoming more and more frequent, and very time consuming, and additional material is being continually taken in”.

Conditions were “most uncongenial” and an “uncomfortable working environment”. However, the “necessary task” could be completed part-time in three or four weeks by the former Plans and Records Officer in the Estates department with his “special knowledge”. Headquarters resisted, but eventually the ex-officer was employed part-time from April 1980 to “sort and cull”. The weeks became months. The Hemel Manager later berated Headquarters for sending records by courier:

“without any advance notice and without any thought for their proper storage and filing....to have files just dumped negatives the system introduced for the proper retrieval of information....let me know how this material is to be recorded and stored, and also whether you intend sending a member of staff down to carry out this work....without this proper recording the information might just as well have been destroyed....in view of the situation currently in the Depository as a result of the recent delivery it would be a little pointless further files being sent for the time being”.

⁷⁵ CNT Glen House: N22/2.

⁷⁶ CNT Hemel Hempstead: 01/5/13.

⁷⁷ CNT Hemel Hempstead: 01/5/13.

⁷⁸ CNT Glen House: N22/2.

⁷⁹ CNT Glen House file: “List of Closed files sent to depository”, 1980-1982, EP Records Centre.

⁸⁰ CNT Hemel Hempstead: “Fernville Lane Depository”.

The Chief Administrative Officer responded that deliveries were always notified and listed.⁸¹

Because they were not formal records centres, ad hoc off-site storage facilities were affected by the asset disposal programme. In 1981 a Hatfield office being refurbished for sale contained a room holding finance and legal records which needed moving to the Depository. The Dacorum Museum Advisory Committee sought permission to use the vacant upper level to solve its own storage problems. This was declined as, with CNT's proposed centralisation, "there is some uncertainty about our own storage requirements and it is possible that we might need to use the whole building".⁸²

In 1982 the working party managing records centralisation, as part of CNT's centralisation of offices, noted that accommodation "would be tight and therefore a repository, possibly outside London, would be needed for the storage of material not in day-to-day use. Various possible locations were being explored". In-house storage was possible as originally the new Office Manager's staff was expected to include "a competent person to take charge of the repository".⁸³ However, Fernville did not survive Hemel Office closure. Insufficient space was the clear impetus for operating Fernville. However, informal in-house storage solutions did not provide comprehensive records management.

Glen House lacked space to store combined records of six closed offices. Unresolved public record status could not excuse inaction, and CNT was forced into depositing archives in county record offices, destroying unwanted records, and securing commercial storage for retained closed records. However, CNT's response only addressed the immediate issue of insufficient space.

In-house Records Centres

Only the corporations at Telford and Milton Keynes included closed records stores in formal records management programmes. They had space, money and vision. In addition to storage considerations, both wanted to bequeath an historic legacy. Telford attempted life cycle records management with a registry and records centre in the same department, but Milton Keynes did not link its registry and records centre.⁸⁴

Telford Development Corporation (TDC) agreed a records management programme in 1983 following a report from its Archivist. A records centre of 2000 cubic feet was created on-site in 1984. Records were stored in acid-free archival quality boxes in an air-conditioned, temperature and humidity-controlled environment. TDC policy stated that records were a corporate responsibility. The Archivist and departmental liaison officers co-operated to facilitate records

⁸¹ CNT Glen House: N22/2.

⁸² CNT Hemel Hempstead: 01/5/13.

⁸³ CNT Hemel Hempstead: 01/5/13.

⁸⁴ As MKDC Records Centre became CNT/EP Records Centre from 1992, it is discussed in Chapter 7.1.

transfers. There were surveys of departmental holdings, forms for listing and transfer of non-current records, and quarterly overdue loan recalls.⁸⁵ When TDC moved headquarters in 1989 from Priorslee Hall to New Town House, a records annex was purpose-built. An unmanned Snedshill trading estate unit – a general dump for closed records from 1975 – was vacated. Some records were destroyed, and others moved into a warehouse at Coalbrookdale that eventually passed to Ironbridge Gorge Trust in 1992.⁸⁶ The headquarters facility was lost when CNT occupied the smaller Jordan House and used factory units at Stafford Park from 1991 to 1999 for closed records storage.⁸⁷

Commercial storage

The commercial records storage market did not influence corporations, as it was not widely available before the 1980s. Likewise it was not seriously considered by CNT until 1982 when it discussed services with Security Archives (whose brochure it had filed in 1978 as of possible interest), but entered into an agreement with Tele-Link Archives (later BDM).⁸⁸

Commercial storage provided convenience, but not professional records management. CNT's records problem worsened in 1982-88, because it stored out of sight without review and disposal. Also, there were service issues with the particular provider. Difficulties with listing and storage were identified in early 1983, and problems with missing records recurred throughout 1984 and 1985. Withdrawal was not considered, as there was no internal alternative. When CNT inherited additional towns from 1985, any storage space accrual was taken by inherited records, and, in fact, CNT moved closed records from these towns into BDM as soon as possible. This increased activity added to complaints. In 1989 Peter Lane reported from Washington that the "lack of professionalism shown by BDM when receiving the first consignment is a matter of adverse comment at Usworth. The receiving staff were YTS, the boxes were thrown about and no receipt offered or given. It is hoped BDM will do better in future." Lane suggested using the Tyne and Wear Archives Service (TWAS) commercial records management unit instead, as at that time "their efficiency and reliability are much ahead of that shown by Britannia."⁸⁹ Only involvement with the PRO in 1988-90, after resolution of public record status, made CNT examine records management provision by BDM. When BDM failed to deliver, CNT determined upon withdrawal, although not necessarily from commercial storage altogether. Other companies were considered, and the Government depository at Hayes. However, MKDC's transfer presented an internal option.

⁸⁵ CNT Records file: 30/3/5/3, "Records – Departmental – West Midlands (Telford) – Records Section", 1992-1998, EP Records Centre.

⁸⁶ Interviews: various dates, Rae Green (Telford Development Corporation/CNT employee) – Author's Notes.

⁸⁷ CNT Records: 30/3/5/3.

⁸⁸ CNT Records: 30/1/1/8; 30/1/1/9.

⁸⁹ CNT Records: 30/4/21.

Persistent dissatisfaction with commercial out-sourcing contributed to the impetus towards CNT's formal records management. CNT could address its own procedural failings through the Glen House Records Unit which identified in 1989 that loans had not been tracked or returned to storage since 1983, and tried to improve control over future deposits with a restyled 'Records Transfer List'.⁹⁰ However, it needed BDM to identify, review and dispose of holdings on its behalf. PRO criticism fuelled CNT's outlook. In 1989 DFALS wrote to BDM to complain about poor service. In 1991 BDM admitted "our record did leave a lot to be desired".⁹¹

Commercial storage was a superficial solution, increasingly used by organisations in the 1990s, as an alternative to applying records management, or in conjunction with an internal programme. Some HATs used it, as did London Docklands Urban Development Corporation following a terrorist attack on Canary Wharf.⁹² A Cabinet Office/PRO scoping study in 1997 recommended departments consider "market testing or contracting out file storage where this has not previously been done" to seek cost-savings.⁹³ Commercial storage is not inherently bad. In 2003 TNA began using the DeepStore service when Hayes was redeveloped.⁹⁴ In 1992, CNT's dissatisfaction combined with improved internal facilities. Creation of a formal records management section allowed redirection from out-sourcing to in-house storage, within a formal and professional records management system.

5.3 TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE

Effects of Changing Technology on Records

Technological innovation theoretically brings convenience and efficiency to the workplace. Machines generally speed up information generation, gathering and transmittal, and allow wide-spread sharing and copying. Drawbacks usually appear after implementation. For example, photocopiers and printers raised paper consumption levels and increased duplication.

The case study organisations reflected this and other technological changes. Manual presentation aids gave way to overhead projectors in the 1980s then PowerPoint in the late 1990s. Audio-visual technology was in flux. From the 1990s cassettes and vinyl records were overtaken by compact discs (CDs). In the 1980s video tapes and video players replaced film reels and projectors, to be themselves outpaced by digital video discs (DVDs) in the 2000s. Video tape sizes decreased, making, for example, the twelve inch discs used for the BBC's Domesday Book

⁹⁰ CNT Glen House: AG 21.

⁹¹ CNT Records: 30/1/1/9.

⁹² CNT Records file: 30/1/8/4, "Records – General and Policy – Urban Development Corporations – London Docklands", 1992-1998, EP Records Centre.

⁹³ Simon Culhane, Una O'Brien, and Elizabeth Honer, "Records Storage & Management, A Scoping Study for The Prime Minister's Adviser on Efficiency & The Keeper of Public Records", unpublished report by the Cabinet Office and the Public Record Office, February 1997, p1.

anniversary project in 1986 quickly inaccessible except on a handful of preserved micro-computers.⁹⁵ Different formats appeared among new town records.

From the 1990s the rate and scale of change from improvements and innovations in information technology was vast, with a corresponding increase in computer-use and literacy. Changing working practices influenced records creation and location. In record offices in the 1980s computers were a novelty, whilst in government bodies typing pools gave way to individual word-processing facilities. By comparison, in the early twenty first century, increasing numbers of staff work remotely. Technological empowerment of individuals contributed to the decline of organisation-wide manual control systems such as centralised filing registries, and risked loss of the business benefits of organisation-wide information management.⁹⁶

In the 1980s, record-creation, maintenance and preservation issues were rarely considered by manufacturers, so records managers needed to analyse and respond to changing technologies and records formats. In 1990 the PRO advised that two developments in office practice – the use of facsimile transmissions on thermal paper which faded, and *Post-it Notes* which fell off – were “entirely unsuitable for use on office files”.⁹⁷ DROs were also warned against unsuitable plastic wallets and covers for files which generated static causing migration of image from original paper on laser-printed and photocopied material to rigid plastic covers.

Automation transformed business processes. In the 1980s and 1990s manual terriers were replaced with digital mapping using geotechnical information system software. From 1989 MKDC’s Land Information System (LIS) project computerised all corporation land holding plans, recording every change – acquisition, adoption, lease and disposal – graphically and in database format. This was completed for the transfer to CNT in 1992, and was continued and expanded under CNT/EP.⁹⁸

Improved technology created a need for records management, but only a formal records management function was concerned with the records issues it brought. Only Records staff at CNT pondered whether computer systems introduced as tools to organise information and create workflows, such as the Assets Database, replaced or supplemented manual records, or constituted

⁹⁴ David Thomas, “The National Archives goes underground”, *Places of Deposit Bulletin*, November 2003, pp4-5.

⁹⁵ Document SOS, *SOS News, The Newsletter of Document SOS – National Experts in Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity*, Autumn 2002.

⁹⁶ See Chapter 1.4 and Bibliography for works on the effects of technological change.

⁹⁷ *PRO RAD Newsletter*, No 32, January 1990, and No 33, May 1990, in CNT Records: 30/1/3/1.

⁹⁸ MKDC file: DPM/1/4/3, “Systems (Internal Files) Non-Financial Systems Land Utilisation”, 1980-1983, consignment 40/17/2, EP Records Centre; CNT Records file: 30/3/2/21, “Records – Departmental – Central (Milton Keynes) – Land Information Systems (LIS)”, 1992-1998, EP Records Centre; Roger Evans Urban Design, *Introduction to the London Docklands Development Corporation Land Information System*, London Docklands Development Corporation

records in themselves. Staff did not automatically consider archival issues, consult Records staff, or recognise that electronic information management systems generated records. Records staff tried to keep abreast of changing formats and new types of records. For example, from 1996 Records asked for print-outs of the CNT web site after changes.⁹⁹ From 1999 the EP web site was captured periodically on CD-ROM.

Microfilming

Microfilming was the clearest example of new technology influencing people, and was firmly linked to records storage. In 1953-54 Harlow Development Corporation examined microfilming to both save storage space and insure against loss of original records.¹⁰⁰ In 1965 CNT's Chief Administrative Officer McKenzie noted that he had discussed with Crawley Office "whether we should embark upon microfilming records" because of the quantity of unlisted records. In 1966 the Chief Architect recommended to McKenzie the "proper storage" of records because:

"As a body owning very substantial property, it is most important that proper record drawings be obtained from all who carry out, or who have carried out, development for the Commission or their predecessors. When we take over Welwyn and Hatfield we should go into this problem in detail, investigate microfilming and make a decision on the appropriate location for our records. It will then be necessary for the duties of a librarian or archivist to be settled on one individual".¹⁰¹

When in 1967 the Administrative Officer at Welwyn asked managers whether microfilming would be "any sort of solution" to shortage of space, the local Chief Engineer replied that they had sufficient room for plans for three years but that microfilming would be a space solution. The Chief Estates Officer advised that it "would be worthwhile in the long term, because of this system's obvious advantages and great saving in space." CNT's Chief Architect again advocated microfilming in 1968, as "quite a lot of additional building has been and is being done and records are accumulating" and "the sooner we start the better".¹⁰²

Microfilming was undertaken by interested departments rather than as a strategic corporate solution. In 1970 the Accountant at Hemel Hempstead met with two companies "to discuss the problems involved in micro-filming our financial records". In 1971 the Manager at Crawley thought destruction of papers was, apart from "the possibility of microfilming", the only solution

unpublished report, nd [c1990]; London Docklands Development Corporation, *Introducing The Estates Department's Land Information System*, unpublished report, April 1991.

⁹⁹ CNT Records files: 30/1/2/9, "Records – General and Policy – Computers – World Wide Web (WWW), 1992-1998, EP Records Centre; 30/3/1/4, "Records – Departmental – Corporate – Marketing", 1992-1998, EP Records Centre.

¹⁰⁰ Harlow Development Corporation file: 90/2, "Administration – Organisation and Filing From Jan 1949 To Oct 1957", 1949-1957, Essex Record Office.

¹⁰¹ CNT Glen House: N22/2.

¹⁰² CNT Glen House: N22/2.

to insufficient storage. In 1975 the Chief Architect felt the cost of microfilming plans was justified by quicker retrieval than from “storage of dusty rolls of damaged negatives”.¹⁰³

Microfilm was widely welcomed for most of the case study, not just in CNT. In 1978 Bracknell Development Corporation’s Administrative Officer suggested to CNT that diverse new town systems and hardware could largely be overcome before transfer of documents by agreeing a common microfilming system.¹⁰⁴ However, the case study shows that there was uncertainty over whether microfilm should replace original records. Microfilming of plans was introduced at MKDC with the intention of destroying original negatives. However, staff soon began retaining originals for quality assurance, thus increasing record holdings.¹⁰⁵ In 1986, Delwyn Tibbott, County Archivist of Gwent, was concerned that Cwmbran Development Corporation housing records, transferred to Torfaen Borough Council, would be destroyed after microfilming, without reference to his record office. He asserted that “a properly constituted records management scheme is the most efficient and economic way of dealing with any record problems.”¹⁰⁶ Also, microfilm presented problems of identification and access, and of cross-referencing to paper plans. At closure of CNT Washington Office, Peter Lane found microfilmed drawing records difficult to understand.¹⁰⁷

In 1991, following establishment of dedicated records management at CNT, Les Field asked heads of departments for details of microfilmed records and opinions on the usefulness of completing microfilming programmes.¹⁰⁸ However, a policy remained unrealised by 1992. As the rest of CNT did not microfilm, MKDC’s plans microfilming ended after transfer. Microfilming of Milton Keynes finance records continued until the corporation’s consultancy ended in 1994. The Records section was not involved in microfilming thereafter, and microfilm became a rarely accessed legacy record.¹⁰⁹ This in itself was a manifestation of change.

After offices closed, stored microfilm collections lost original purpose, order, and staff who understood them. Lost context was more significant for records in a non-standard format than for paper files. Microforms often became separated from indices, and were susceptible to damage. Those stored in Portland House basement in the 1990s suffered damp and mould. Microfilming created records issues, but did not bring formal records management.

¹⁰³ CNT Glen House: N22/2.

¹⁰⁴ Bracknell DC/CNT: 305-4.

¹⁰⁵ Milton Keynes Development Corporation file: 20/1/37, “Private Housing – Microfilming - Policy”, 1983, consignment 902/6/4, EP Records Centre; Author’s Knowledge.

¹⁰⁶ Cwmbran Development Corporation file: A3, “Archives”, 1985-1988, consignment CM 219, EP Records Centre.

¹⁰⁷ CNT Records: 30/4/21; 30/3/3/2.

¹⁰⁸ CNT Records file: 30/1/2/1, “Records – General and Policy – Computers – General”, 1992-1998, EP Records Centre.

¹⁰⁹ CNT Records file: 30/3/6/9, “Records – Departmental – Consultants – Touche Ross”, 1992-1998, EP Records Centre.

Electronic Records

The second area of changing technology in the period under examination was the growth of electronic records. When CNT became a public record body electronic records management was in its infancy. Most developments occurred after CNT's records management section was in place and electronic records, at least until the late 1990s, did not visibly give impetus for records management.

When electronic mail (e-mail) was discussed in a 1990 PRO newsletter, it was so new that its function required explanation. A decade later, the PRO took the lead for the Government in the complex field of electronic records management.¹¹⁰ Professionals recognised the implications of the global communication shift from print to electronic media, for decision-making and operations, and resulting records. The School of Library, Archive and Information Studies (SLAIS) at University College London (UCL) offered a training video package *Electronic Records In The New Millennium*, by 1994. The key points were that information services and technology enabled business processes, that organisational ability to meet objectives and provide accountability depended on capacity to manage electronic records, that such management affected legal validity, pressure for disclosure of information was growing ahead of any legislation, and there were implications for businesses across international boundaries. Issues to address included electronic information sustainability, technical obsolescence and long-term preservation, the impact of changing workplaces and office technologies, business process redesign and functional appraisal.¹¹¹ Moves towards use of image-processed documents and information stored on electronic document management systems as primary evidence, rather than secondary like photocopies and microfilm, was reflected in the 1996 BSI-DISC Code of Practice on the Legal Admissibility of Electronic Documents (following the Civil Evidence Act, 1995).¹¹²

CNT Records staff responded to new technology in the workplace. Records officers had access to electronic mail (e-mail) at the end of 1995, but not for all their staff until 1997.¹¹³ The Records Management Meeting (RMM) in 1996 rejected a suggestion of distributing its minutes by e-mail attachments.¹¹⁴ In 1996 IT issued "Staff Regulations for the Use of E-Mail" because the medium was "now widely used". These stated that no correspondence committing CNT contractually should be sent by e-mail, that staff should do regular "housekeeping" to keep computer inboxes "tidy", and hard copies of all e-mail where decisions were taken "should be filed in the normal

¹¹⁰ *PRO RAD Newsletter*, No 34, October 1990, in CNT Records 30/1/3/1; Public Record Office, *Electronic Records Management, e-records evidence-based management of information resources*, toolkit, Kew, Public Record Office, 2001.

¹¹¹ CNT Records file: 30/1/2/8, "Records – General and Policy – Computers – Electronic Document Management Systems - General", 1992-1998, EP Records Centre.

¹¹² British Standards Institution, BSI-DISC – PD 0008 *The Legal Admissibility of Electronic Documents*, London, British Standards Institution 1996; UK *Civil Evidence Act, 1995, Ch 38*, London, HMSO, 1995.

¹¹³ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

way with other correspondence for records purposes.” When external e-mail was piloted in 1996 for adoption in 1997, as it could “be useful in contacting consultants”, it came with a warning from Director Central not to “send any e-mail out that you are not prepared to stick on a notice board with your name on it.” He said it “should only be used to replace a telephone conversation. Any matter which requires a file note or other paper copy should be dealt with by a letter.”¹¹⁵ With e-mail becoming the preferred means of business communication, CNT policy remained to print to file, like most government bodies into the 2000s, although anecdotally it was believed widely ignored. Potential corporate memory loss was an incentive for electronic records management in the Modernising Government Agenda of 1999.¹¹⁶

In 1990, the PRO highlighted a lack of communication and understanding between IT and records managers, which remained a recognisable problem:

“It is not often, if ever, that any consideration is given to the requirements of Records Management when electronic systems are being installed. There seems to be no idea on the part of the people implementing the systems that the Records Services section should be kept informed or in fact actively involved. They are not aware in most cases of the Public Records Act and the requirements it places on an organisation; neither are they usually brimming with knowledge about Records Management themselves, but see files as something to be avoided at all costs. In an ideal world a member of the Records Services section would be involved from the very start, perhaps be co-opted as a member of the committee involved with the implementation of E-Mail, so that Records Management is given its proper place, that policy concerning machine readable records can be put in place and the necessary safeguards installed to prevent the loss of Public Record Office material.”¹¹⁷

CNT’s DRO embraced this by reporting developments in electronic records management to the RMM, plus the PRO’s recommendation for stronger links between IT and Records Management. He also attended relevant events.¹¹⁸

In 1994 and 1995 the DRO informed CNT of the PRO’s published requirements on electronic records.¹¹⁹ He requested an inventory of CNT computer systems and urged CNT “to address the complex issues and implications such as security, provenance, version control, storage, data-loss, differentiation between dross and important records kept only in electronic format.” The RMM noted PRO interest and that DROs should contribute to retention guidelines. However, this

¹¹⁴ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

¹¹⁵ CNT Records file: 30/1/2/7, “Records - General and Policy – Computers - E Mail”, 1992-1998, EP Records Centre; CNT Records: 30/1/2/1.

¹¹⁶ UK The Prime Minister, *Modernising Government*; National Audit Office, *Modernising Government, Executive Summary of the Modernising Government White Paper*, June 1999. URA was used as a key modernising government study, for assisting local regeneration, as part of ‘joined-up’ government.

¹¹⁷ *PRO RAD Newsletter*, No 34, in CNT Records 30/1/3/1.

¹¹⁸ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

¹¹⁹ Andy Carty, *Requirements under the Public Records Act when using Information Technology*, Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency and Public Record Office, London, HMSO, 1994.

remained the age of hard-copy. When Basildon Office finance system approached closure, staff printed everything off. CNT's IT strategy assumed gradual contraction, then handover to a residuary body in 1998. The IT Manager foresaw a need for "strict housekeeping" in the data-collecting systems, and advocated guidelines, but did not offer to compile them. At CNT's National Computer Systems User Group (NCSUG) the topic "provoked some lively discussion as those present tried to grasp the implications. The overall impression was that it raised the awareness of computer records actually being records and requiring to be managed according to laid down criteria." The DRO drafted a paper for Executive Management Group, but his directors did not take it forward.¹²⁰ This shows the difficulty in obtaining agreement or action when staff assume they are working to a finite point, and there is no central directive or control.

In 1995 the Finance and Disengagement Manager (South) raised the implications of IT developments for records reproduction and storage, reminiscent of the Chief Architect's enthusiasm for microfilming in the 1960s. The RMM felt that given "the heavy initial outlay, CNT's limited lifespan, the experiences with the 1970's "panacea" of microfilming, and the considerations necessary for archival records, there was little benefit in CNT pursuing high technology storage methods."¹²¹ Commercial electronic document management systems in the 1990s omitted retention and review.

By close of the case study, technology was transforming management of information, and allowing electronic service delivery. Functionality included intelligent document capture, content creation, indexing, retrieval, management, collaboration, application integration, multi-channel delivery, website development and publishing, personalisation, and asset management. Commentators feared 'information overload', 'information fatigue syndrome', and 'data smog', but some suggested that records management centres could develop into knowledge centres.¹²² Electronic document and records management systems from the 2000s improved records management functionality. Enterprise Content Management solutions to support business processes by capturing, managing, storing, preserving and delivering information were discussed. Collaborative processes across widely-dispersed workforces were encouraged, and justified technological investment. It was not until the Modernising Government Agenda, followed by Freedom of Information requirements, that electronic records management increased its profile in EP. Electronic records management, like information access legislation, perhaps prompted many organisations to examine records management issues and practices. However, although technology encouraged staff to value records management, staff still looked to IT to tackle electronic records issues.

¹²⁰ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2; CNT Glen House file: CSR/1/2, "Records Section Correspondence file", 1989-1996, consignment 1397/4/1, EP Records Centre.

¹²¹ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

¹²² Derek Charman, ed, *International Records Management Council Newsletter*, New Series No 2, May 1997, pp1-2.

5. 4 INFLUENCE OF EXTERNAL BODIES

Before the 1960s, external interest in new town records concerned the deposit of odd historic items in record offices, resulting from action by interested individuals. Not all records-related organisations that might have displayed archival interest, and thereby influenced records management development, did so. A 1959 warrant enlarged the terms of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts (HMC) to include all historical records outside of public records, but HMC did not pursue new town records.¹²³ The initiatives by Peter Walne in 1965 and the ACA in 1980 were motivated by archival interest in historic new town records, not directly in records management, but drew in the PRO and influenced records management development in the new towns. However, apart from this, before the 1980s there was little direct external records management influence on new town bodies, and little best practice guidance was available. 'Records management' was mainly an internal matter for organisations.

Standards and Theory

As a global discipline 'records management' only began in the late twentieth century, and was not a term widely recognised by corporation/CNT staff. They associated records with filing clerks, and archivists if they existed. The MKDC Records Centre of 1985-92 was always called "MKDC Archives" by staff – even those who worked there.¹²⁴ Standards, or contemporary professional literature, hardly influenced new town organisations. Occasionally they reached interested individuals, such as when Redditch Development Corporation Librarian Ken Small was loaned a Michael Cook textbook by the County Archivist of Hereford and Worcester in 1982.¹²⁵ Records management was generally underdeveloped, with no direct channel for current thinking to infiltrate new towns, and no receptive audience (excepting qualified archivists at Telford and Milton Keynes in the 1980s). Lack of industry standards affected the ability of CNT/EP Records staff to promote records management, although promotion of the new international standard ISO 15489 in 2001, failed to elicit reaction from staff. Standards were a long-term building block in the professionalisation of records management.¹²⁶

However, from 1987, CNT staff with records responsibilities were attending seminars by, and receiving literature from, the PRO and the Records Management Society, and regularly interacting with local archivists. This apparently took effect, for in 1992 CNT appointed its first qualified archivist. Standards and theory influenced professionalisation via qualified staff, but

¹²³ *Whitaker's Almanack 1992*, 124th edition, London, HMSO, 1992, p356. From 2003 the HMC was combined with the PRO to act as The National Archives (TNA).

¹²⁴ Author's Knowledge.

¹²⁵ Michael Cook, *Archives Administration, A Manual for Intermediate and Smaller Organisations and for Local Government*, William Dawson and Sons, Folkestone, 1977; Worcestershire RO: Acc 10300/792 (ii).

¹²⁶ British Standards Institution, *BS ISO 15489-1:2001 Information and Documentation – Records Management*, London, British Standards Institution, 2001.

were applied late in the case study. The improved approach after professionalisation suggests that standards and theory should have been applied in the new town organisations from creation via an integral records management function, for example as part of public records requirements.¹²⁷

Professional Associations

Professional archives and records management bodies existed when new towns first considered records issues, such as the British Records Association (founded 1932), the Business Archives Council (1934), and Aslib (1924), but were not influential.¹²⁸ The Society of Local Archivists (1947) broadened its appeal as the Society of Archivists (1955), and established a Records Management Group (1977). Peter Walne was Honorary Secretary of the Society of Archivists when he approached CNT in 1965, but he did so in his capacity as County Archivist of Hertfordshire.¹²⁹ Records management interested a few individuals, but not the early archive profession in general. Many British records professionals only began in the 1980s to address the issues and implications of modern records.

However, the new towns' struggle to manage records was typical of a growing problem recognised by professional bodies by the 1980s. The inaugural bulletin of the Records Management Society of Great Britain stated in 1983:

“The records management environment in Britain has changed dramatically in the last decade. In all the branches of Industry, Commerce and Public Service, an increasing proportion of the work force is engaged in the creation, processing, storage and retrieval of records and information. There has emerged, almost un-noticed, a whole class of people who, regardless of their job title or position in the organisation, find themselves primarily involved in the management and control of records.”¹³⁰

The founders felt that learned, professional and interest groups then covering records and information management, lacked remit or resources to “support the needs of the many individuals and institutions with widely differing backgrounds who seek practical advice and assistance in all aspects of their work in records and information management”. Thus, a professional qualification was not a prerequisite for membership. An early committee member was Sue Bramley, Archivist of Telford Development Corporation (1983-85). Clearly some new towns Records staff believed that here was an organisation with something to offer them.

¹²⁷ The effects of professional staff implementing records management are examined in Chapters 6-7.

¹²⁸ Susan Snell, “The 1990s and beyond, The continuing role of the British Records Association”, *Records Management Bulletin*, no 65, Dec 1994, pp3-5; Graham Southwood, “The Business Archives Council”, *Records Management Bulletin*, no 18, February 1987, p3; Dennis Lewis, “Aslib, The Association for Information Management”, *Records Management Bulletin*, no 20, June 1987, p4.

¹²⁹ Amanda Arrowsmith, “Recordari: the 50th anniversary of the Society of (Local) Archivists”, *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, 19, no 2, October 1998, pp229-234.

¹³⁰ Records Management Society, “The Background”, *Records Management Bulletin*, no 1, Autumn 1983, p1.

In 1983 the *Records Management Bulletin* drew attention to the evolution of UK records management, largely within the archives profession which regarded it as the administration of semi-current records through bulk storage and retention/disposal schedules. Current records were managed separately. Neither activity was highly rated by organisations. The editor compared the USA, Australia and South Africa where records managers administered current and semi-current records and were concerned with related disciplines. He advocated that a range of disciplines could be brought together for mutual benefit under the ‘umbrella’ of ‘records management’.¹³¹ This was taken forward by CNT Records staff from 1992.

Thus professional bodies became more aware and active, and became available to organisations, including those in the study. In 1983, when MKDC examined its records with Buckinghamshire Record Office, the Special Projects Officer and “Acting Archivist” joined the “Archivist Society” as “a valuable source of expert advice”. His successor, the Central Administrative Services Manager, considered Society of Archivists membership in 1984.¹³² A Cwmbran Development Corporation officer attended a Society of Archivists Records Management Group seminar in 1985 in response to a general invitation to local authorities from Gwent Record Office.¹³³ CNT purchased RMS corporate membership by 1991.¹³⁴ However, influence and information came into CNT *after* a records management role had been allocated to Field and Moon and when staff were seeking advice. Professional bodies were largely only reactive towards records management in the case study organisations.

Other Government Bodies

As demonstrated in Chapter 4, records management progress in the new town bodies was hampered by civil servants in the sponsor body. The DoE initially resisted public record status for CNT, and always for corporations, and insisted on treating CNT and corporations separately. There followed the delay (1978-84) in laying CNT’s public record status before Parliament, and failure to recognise the implications. Government records guidance largely appeared after CNT had gained public record status, and after CNT had developed formal records management, so this was not the impetus.¹³⁵

¹³¹ A A Cole, “Editorial Thoughts”, *Records Management Bulletin*, no 2, January 1984, pp3-4.

¹³² MKDC: 1/15/4/1.

¹³³ Cwmbran DC: A3.

¹³⁴ CNT Records file: 30/1/5/1, “Records – General and Policy – Records Management Society – General”, 1992-1998, EP Records Centre.

¹³⁵ For example, in 1994 the Treasury advocated “establishment of a good, comprehensive system of records”, security of physical records, and an inventory of assets with “valued information” defined as data, records, archives and historically significant artefacts, and a “comprehensive

The Public Record Office

The PRO became interested in new town records in 1965 because Peter Walne wanted the Hertfordshire towns records for his repository. The PRO might never have taken the initiative, as its interests and resources appeared focused on larger departments throughout the case study. The PRO's involvement with CNT was intermittent after 1968, surfacing in 1978 and 1984 over the status issue, and in 1980-82 via the ACA/NTA working party, the latter again resulting from local archivist initiative. The PRO took two decades to resolve CNT's public record status against DoE indifference.¹³⁶

The PRO dealt with corporations only via CNT and county archivists. The PRO resisted giving the Redditch Development Corporation Librarian/Archivist a copy of its *Manual of Records Administration* in 1983 because corporations were not public record bodies.¹³⁷ A co-ordinated approach to a policy across new towns, facilitated by the PRO, may have helped, but was unlikely as even though the PRO had a modern records department from 1959, the PRO did not appear records management-orientated.¹³⁸ The PRO began changing from 1992 as an Executive Agency. In 1997 it sought a higher profile in government records management.¹³⁹ By 2001 it claimed "reinvention as an efficient, knowledge-based and customer-focused operation".¹⁴⁰

After public record status was awarded in 1984, the relationship between CNT and the PRO grew slowly, but the PRO remained reactive towards CNT's approaches in 1984-87. With hindsight, the PRO failed to take an opportunity. CNT was, unusually, added to the public record bodies list, and could have provided a working study for review and selection, transfers and closures, to formulate recommendations for wider application. However, the PRO was unprepared for such initiatives, and was even uncertain what had happened to new town records. When the Order in Council was achieved, Alexandra Nicol told Patrick King, County Archivist of Northamptonshire, that "I don't know if you hold the records of Corby", asking to be informed if he did, so that she could alter his Place of Deposit Instrument.¹⁴¹ In 1987, following a meeting with CNT about backlog sorting of records, Nicol again asked King if any records from Corby Development Corporation were likely to transfer to CNT. Corby had transferred in 1980.¹⁴²

information base" to "support effective decision making". HM Treasury, *Risk Management Guidance Note*, London, HM Treasury, June 1994, pp1,8.

¹³⁶ The PRO was similarly inactive with RDAs in 1999. See Chapter 6.6.

¹³⁷ Worcestershire RO: Acc 10300/792 (ii).

¹³⁸ John Cantwell, "The New Style Public Record Office 1992: the transition from the old order", *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, 14, no 1 1993, p42.

¹³⁹ Culhane, O'Brien, and Honer.

¹⁴⁰ Elizabeth Hallam Smith, "E-government and E-commerce in Action", *Overview: the magazine for the modern civil service*, December 2000/January 2001, pp74-77.

¹⁴¹ Northamptonshire RO: Box File.

¹⁴² It is possible she meant corporation records held at CNT Corby Office, but it adds to the impression that no one completely understood, or had control of, the new towns records situation.

PRO activity increased from 1987. Inspecting Officer reports and meetings with CNT helped Field and Moon formulate strategy, and promote records management to senior staff. Nicol's husband being a senior figure in the DoE New Towns Division was a useful connection, still referred to in CNT and the PRO from 1993. The DRO believed this promoted records management until Mrs Nicol's retirement in 1997, although it again exemplified dependence upon individuals. Records management was not automatically accepted or embedded. Although contact with the PRO diminished again in 1991-93, the interaction since 1987 – stemming from the Public Records Acts – helped formal CNT records management develop into a comprehensive records management programme from 1992.

Local Authority Record Offices

New towns bodies recognised county archives and made occasional deposits and gifts, but this contact did not concern management of records. Clearly, Walne of Hertfordshire, who first raised retention, review and transfer of new town records, had *influence* in 1965-66. He undoubtedly prompted the process that ultimately led to the establishment of CNT's formal records management.¹⁴³ However, Walne lacked *power* to achieve his recommendations. Subsequent years saw relative inaction caused by unresolved public record status. No legislation preserved historic records of new town corporations. Local archivists involved in new towns wielded influence rather than power.¹⁴⁴ The nearest to a unified local-level initiative was the ACA/NTA working party, which failed to persuade the DoE to make corporations into public record bodies.

The general lack of interaction and influence was highlighted by the Bracknell Head Record Keeper's correspondence with County Archivist of Worcestershire, E H Sargeant, in 1973. Sargeant's son (a corporation employee) had told him of Bracknell's records issues.¹⁴⁵ Sargeant suggested that "record keeping is very much a matter for the individual owners, and until recently there was no very precise legislation about the duty of an authority to keep its records properly". He hoped things would improve with the DoE's draft Consultation Paper on Local Authority Records and the requirement in the Local Government Act, 1972 for local authorities to make "proper arrangements" for care of their documents.¹⁴⁶ Local archivists' unfamiliarity with new

¹⁴³ Walne was conscious of his role, writing to Alexandra Nicol in 1984: "It is nice to hear that the hare I started on its course some twenty years ago has at long last passed the finishing line", and in 1985: "Being the one who started this all off so many years ago, I'm glad the tortoise has finally cross [sic] the line." Hertfordshire Record Office office file: E8/4, "Commission for the New Towns General", 1982-.

¹⁴⁴ Sometimes this influence was aided by other external influences. Philip Riden, engaged to write Cwmbran Development Corporation's official history, urged it in 1986 to start depositing archives at Gwent Record Office. Cwmbran Development Corporation file: C4a, "Correspondence Re Corp Wind Up", 1982-1988, consignment CM 219, EP Records Centre.

¹⁴⁵ Berkshire Record Office office file: A3026 [Bracknell Development Corporation/CNT/EP accessions and correspondence], 1973-.

¹⁴⁶ UK *Local Government Act, 1972*, London, HMSO, 1972. See also section 5.5 for legislative impetus.

towns organisations is shown by Sargeant's uncertainty whether corporations were classed as local authorities.

Local authority records management was under-developed and therefore non-influential for much of the case study. Shropshire's records management function began in 1986 and Dorset's in 1996. Buckinghamshire commissioned a feasibility study in 1991, but delayed implementation. Record offices were not always linked to council records management units where they existed, for example at Leicestershire in 1988.¹⁴⁷ CNT was persuaded by TWAS in 1990 to use its records management unit, but only as alternative commercial storage to its existing contract.

Before formal records management, CNT's relationships with county archivists were individual and unco-ordinated, with attendant loss of opportunities. A file note by the Deputy County Archivist at Northamptonshire in 1985 recorded a conversation with an electrical contractor working in the store at CNT Corby Office where "records are becoming damp". She "suggested that more emphasis should be put on RM." Whilst a useful observation, the contractor was not best placed to instigate action.¹⁴⁸

Field and Moon recognised a need to deal with multiple record offices, and in 1989 Field expressed his vision during a visit to MKDC:

"to convene a meeting of County Archivists who will be responsible for taking over the various tranches of records inherited by the Commission from all the Development Corporations with a view to evolving a common policy for the identification and handling of this material. Whilst we may be too late in respect of the first generation of New Towns, I would certainly like a system similar to that which you have evolved to be applied to the material which remains in the hands of the Commission before it is passed to the Archivists upon the dissolution of the Commission."¹⁴⁹

CNT staff appeared frustrated to discover archivists did not share their priorities and outlook. In 1991 Field remarked that "...these Archivists are fairly passive..."¹⁵⁰ As a qualified archivist with a local authority background, David Biggs brought empathy and insight, and as DRO took a co-ordinated overview of issues and liaison with all repositories. Good relationships were developed with local record offices through reciprocated visits to discuss review and selection, although contact was generally intermittent and reactive on both sides, depending on whether deposits or loans occurred. Nothing after 1992 compared with the Walne initiative or the ACA/NTA working party, because public record status and deposit relationships with individual record offices existed. CNT's DRO would have welcomed consistency of selection across record offices, but without comprehensive national archives/records legislation this did not occur.

¹⁴⁷ See Bibliography for record offices annual reports consulted; Author's Knowledge.

¹⁴⁸ Northamptonshire RO: Box File.

¹⁴⁹ CNT Records: 30/4/11.

¹⁵⁰ CNT Records: 30/1/2/1.

The ACA/NTA Working Group

In 1980 there was potential for a consistent record office approach through the ACA. As noted in Chapter 4, the discussion meeting augured well.¹⁵¹ It was addressed by CNT's Principal Administrative Officer, Howard Austin, the Telford Development Corporation Archivist, Sula Rayska, and by Alfred Knightbridge, the PRO Liaison Officer.¹⁵² Peter Walne explained the 1960s survey, and two case studies about new towns records transfers were presented. It was hoped that resulting discussion – which included the suggestion that selection should be funded – would prompt concerted action, such as an ACA proposal to CNT, compilation of retention schedules for general use, or “sampling on a nationwide basis to reduce problems of bulk”.¹⁵³

ACA and NTA formed a Joint Working Party on New Town Records and Archives in 1982. The seven members provided good representation: the county archivists of Gwent and Essex (Bill Baker and Vic Gray), Berkshire's records manager, Nigel Clubb, CNT's Howard Austin, and, from the corporations, Sula Rayska of Telford, Ken Small of Redditch, and Warrington and Runcorn's Chief Legal Officer.¹⁵⁴ The objects were to:

“i) draw up a joint statement of guidelines to development corporations approaching the dissolution on the transfer of current and semi-current records to successor authorities and of non-current records to an appropriate place of deposit;

ii) consider whether a joint approach might be made to the Department of the Environment and to the Lord Chancellor's Office to establish more clearly the status of development corporation records in relation to the Public Records Acts.”¹⁵⁵

The resulting report forecast that new town development would be a major topic of research, and “if the story is to be accurate and complete it is important that action should be taken now to ensure that the important records are selected and safeguarded for the future use of administrators and historians”.¹⁵⁶

The working group felt that it could no longer be assumed that all corporations would pass to CNT, thus protecting their records under the Public Records Act. Nevertheless, “there is much to

¹⁵¹ Northamptonshire RO: Box File, “Association of County Archivists Report...1980”; Programme, 1980, in CNT Glen House: N22/5.

¹⁵² Knightbridge worked at the PRO, 1963-91. As Principal Assistant Keeper (PAK) he ran the Modern Records Department, before joining the Records Administration Division in 1977 where as PAK (Appraisal) from 1982 he was concerned with general policy on selection, classification and listing of records transferred to the PRO. He was a founder Director of the Records Management Society of Great Britain (1983-85). Biographical details drawn from: Records Management Society, *Records Management Bulletin*, nos 1-10, Autumn 1983 – May 1985; Cantwell, *The Public Record Office*, p153.

¹⁵³ Northamptonshire RO: Box File, Patrick King's ms notes of ACA meeting 29 October 1980.

¹⁵⁴ Bill Baker, then ACA Chairman, served as working party chairman. Ken Small's assistant, Carolyn Strudwick, (later Mrs Dobbs) sometimes attended. The Secretary of Livingston Development Corporation observed for Scottish new towns.

¹⁵⁵ CNT Glen House: N22/5.

¹⁵⁶ CNT Glen House: N22/5. The report occurs in all record office own files consulted by the author.

be said for having a common approach for all new towns. It is suggested that it would be most fitting for all Corporations to look to the County Council record offices in the way envisaged by the Public Record Office for the Commission's records." The report made four recommendations:

"(1) In order to clarify the status of records of development Corporations in advance of transfer to the Commission and in case such a transfer does not take place, the Department of the Environment be asked to reconsider with the Lord Chancellor's Office and the Public Record Office the question of bringing the records of Development corporations within the Public Records Acts and their transfer to local places of deposit.

(2) well in advance of the date appointed for the winding up of a Development corporation the advice and co-operation be sought of the local County Record office, the staff of which can advise and assist in the selection of those records which ought to be permanently preserved and can arrange where appropriate for their transfer to a place of storage.

(3) an officer of the Development Corporation conversant with its administration should be nominated to liaise with the County Record to assist in the selection of its records.

(4) there should be consultations between the successor authority, the Commission for the New Towns and the County Record Office to designate those records which will be required for current purposes to enable the transfer of records to proceed smoothly."¹⁵⁷

The NTA General Manager's Committee and the Chairmen's Conference welcomed the report in 1982, and NTA's Secretary asked the DoE to consider with the Lord Chancellor's Office and PRO bringing the corporations within the Public Records Act. Corporations actively considered the report. Northampton's Solicitor commented that it was "unimpeachable in its theory and recommendations" but the problems "are inevitably practical". He felt "early action is necessary to identify the nature and size of the records and as early an indication as possible as to which of those records will be required by successor authorities".¹⁵⁸

The archivists involved in the ACA/NTA initiative established a basis for liaison between record offices and new town bodies prior to closure, and broadly influenced archival selection. The working party report was a watershed because it usually instigated first contact with corporations. Although the DoE refused to support public record status for corporation records, the NTA's circular to corporations nevertheless prompted them to sort records. Its impact as an impetus for formal records management varied because it was only guidance, and actions were taken locally. For example, Redditch delayed liaison with Hereford and Worcester Record Office when the corporation's expected closure date was postponed.¹⁵⁹ But discussions at MKDC led to the in-house records centre and secondment of professional archivists, which was ultimately key to CNT's formal records management from 1992.

¹⁵⁷ CNT Glen House: N22/5.

¹⁵⁸ Northamptonshire RO: Box File.

¹⁵⁹ Worcestershire RO: Acc 10300/792 (ii).

Influence of CNT as an outside body

CNT was independent of corporations, and direct influence, if any, occurred during closure periods. Limited impact before 1988 was due to unresolved public records status and lack of policy. CNT and the DoE were more organised when advising corporations in 1988-92. For example, Ian Nicol of the DoE wrote to the General Managers of TDC and MKDC in 1989, requesting they liaise with CNT.¹⁶⁰ MKDC felt prepared, responding that it had “for some time, been taking steps to ensure that effective records of this unique project are maintained”, closely liaising with the County Archivist. In fact, it pointed out, CNT were visiting to discover how the job was being tackled. In 1989 Field and Moon were indeed “most impressed with the efficiency and flexibility of the system” and hoped it would provide a model for CNT.¹⁶¹

Despite MKDC’s records management progressing further than CNT’s by 1989, the fact that it and some other corporations went beyond routine record-keeping, was connected to the developments and issues surrounding CNT records since 1965. This influence came via shared NTA information, the 1982 ACA/NTA working party, and through records disposals during housing transfers and closures.

5.5 LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

Records requirements in the UK are not enacted in a single piece of legislation, and may be affected by enactments whose titles do not refer to records. Records management is affected by corporate governance, and voluntary service standards emanating from quality management and best practice. However, the primary legislation affecting case study records were the Public Records Acts 1958 and 1967, and information access legislation such as the Data Protection Act, 1984.¹⁶²

The case study demonstrates the effect of a lack of a legislative framework for records management. For most of the study period, no legislation required new town bodies to manage records in any particular way or for any specific timescale bar administrative and audit requirements. Records survived into potentially historic collections only due to business practice of keeping records for reference, lack of review and disposal, and hoarding.

CNT did little to constructively manage records until resolution of its public record status in 1984. The role and benefits of records management were further promoted by an increasing momentum for wider information access instigated by the Data Protection Act, 1984. Legislative

¹⁶⁰ CNT Records: 30/4/11.

¹⁶¹ CNT Records: 30/4/11.

¹⁶² UK *Data Protection Act 1984*, Ch 35, London, HMSO, 1984.

limitations were highlighted by Worcestershire's County Archivist, Sargeant, to Bracknell's Head Record Keeper in 1973:

"The problem is a difficult one because no one can really compel anyone else to look after records carefully, even with legislation. I think one has somehow to demonstrate that tidy records are conducive to speed and efficiency and the opposite situation tends to produce chaos and irritation."¹⁶³

The Public Records Acts

The Public Records Acts had minimal impact on CNT's daily records work before public record status was resolved. In corporations they were even less significant because the DoE refused to link those bodies to the Acts. However, potential application of status influenced records disposal in CNT in 1965-84, and indirectly affected corporations' closure preparations where CNT's opinions carried influence. The only direct link made between the Public Records Acts and corporations was the Lord Chancellor's decision in 1985 that the legislation applied retrospectively to archives sent to approved places of deposit as these would otherwise have transferred direct from corporations to CNT and become public records on inheritance.

Legislation did not directly make MKDC introduce its records management arrangement with Buckinghamshire Record Office from 1985, although a strong indirect provenance (discussed in section 5.4 above) came from the ACA/NTA working party. Nor did the Public Records Acts influence MKDC archivists because the records were not public records until inherited by CNT, and transfer was not considered until MKDC's final months.¹⁶⁴ This demonstrates not only that legislation was only one influence, but also that there was a lost opportunity in 1984 for a legislative impetus for records management in corporations, as most did not voluntarily undertake records management programmes before closure like Milton Keynes and Telford.

Despite the absence of public records status in 1965-84, without its potential application management of new town records in the 1960s to 1980s might have been more ill-considered and unco-ordinated. Notwithstanding Sargeant's valid reservation, records legislation is considered by some practitioners to impact significantly.¹⁶⁵ From 1984 public record status impacted upon CNT as the CNT/PRO relationship developed.¹⁶⁶ It underpinned CNT's records programme from 1993, with increased PRO involvement and a dedicated DRO and records management function at CNT.

¹⁶³ Berkshire RO: A3026.

¹⁶⁴ Author's Knowledge.

¹⁶⁵ When, as a result of changes caused by the Greater London Authority Act, 1999, public record status was not applied to Metropolitan Police Service records created from 2000, there was concern that this would "result in a more fragmentary preservation of historical material". Brown, *Records Management Journal*, 11, no 1, April 2001, pp19-34.

¹⁶⁶ This influence is examined in section 5.4.

As a public record body from 1984 CNT was required to appoint a DRO. The position was originally created alongside the chief registrar to operate the Grigg system of record selection. How a DRO functions depends on status and available resources. DRO duties, laid down by the PRO "Manual of Records Administration", included ensuring:

"that their functions are as widely known within their departments as possible, and in particular that they are regarded as the authoritative, natural source of advice on any matters connected with records....DROs must be aware of and control all records created and received in their departments whatever their format...and wherever they are located..."¹⁶⁷

The DRO is responsible to the principal establishment officer (the chief executive or equivalent) for all records from creation or receipt until disposal. By the mid-1980s the role of many DROs was becoming, necessarily, more proactive in record creation to influence sound life-cycle records management. The Cabinet Office's Management and Efficiency Division issued "Management of Registries Guidelines" stating:

"The DRO is responsible for ensuring the provision of cost effective registry management in departments; in particular for: maintaining standards; review procedures; training/awareness; security procedures; and preparing an annual report."¹⁶⁸

CNT's DRO role was initially allocated to senior administrative staff, remote from everyday records work. From 1988 until the 1992 re-organisation, Hilary Moon combined the role with administration. The position only passed to a qualified records manager in 1993. Subsequently, the DRO was full-time and could apply professional knowledge.¹⁶⁹

Public record status and the PRO were useful tools for CNT records managers seeking compliance and co-operation from colleagues in the 1990s, although if an organisation chose to ignore PRO requirements, there seemed, according to PRO staff, little penalty. Also, some PRO requirements struck CNT Records staff as impractical.¹⁷⁰ Legislative limitations were recognised by 1985 when a joint working group of the Society of Archivists, British Records Association and ACA, joined in 1986 by the Standing Conference of National and University Libraries (SCONUL) Advisory Committee on manuscripts, was established.¹⁷¹ Despite public consultation beginning in 2003, no new national legislation had emerged by 2006.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁷ Public Record Office, Government Services Division, "Manual of Records Administration", section 2.1.4, np.

¹⁶⁸ Graham Southwood, "Does RM conflict with role of DRO", *Records Management Bulletin*, no 17, December 1986, pp9-10.

¹⁶⁹ The effect of the DRO's position and status upon records management implementation is covered in section 6.7.

¹⁷⁰ Author's Knowledge. For example, stringent physical preparation and listing of records for the PRO.

¹⁷¹ Society of Archivists, "National Archives Policy Discussion Paper", *Society of Archivists Thames Region Newsletter*, October 1986, np.

¹⁷² The National Archives, "Proposed National Records and Archives Legislation, Proposals to change the current legislative provision for records management and archives", Consultation

Information Access Legislation

Specialised records legislation, like Public Records Acts, carried little weight with CNT staff outside records management. Other legislation did affect them, and this, when combined with records, made more impact. The Data Protection Act, 1984 covered data processed by automatic means. Although forecast to have relevance to records managers, its effect on CNT records management was limited.¹⁷³ Although the PRO issued a paper, “Data Protection and Public Records”, amended in 1986, stating that the PRO should be consulted regarding disposal of automatically-processed records containing personal data, there was no apparent process to measure compliance.¹⁷⁴

In 1989, Moon knew the significance of access legislation: the Data Protection Act and “talk of it being extended to cover paper records”, the Rights of the Subject – Access to Personal Files (Housing) Regulations 1989, and Tenants Choice: Housing Regulations 1989.¹⁷⁵ At Basildon the Housing Department began to package its computerised records for storage but Moon thought data protection advice might be needed.¹⁷⁶ The new Glen House Records Unit assumed responsibility to register systems under the Data Protection Act. The Records Management Meeting transferred responsibility to IT in December 1994.¹⁷⁷ With hindsight this was a mistake for wider and long-term information management. The Data Protection Act, 1998 came into force in 2000, covering the processing of personal information held in electronic or paper format, and this undeniably impacted upon the work of Records. Yet, in EP the role of Data Protection Officer (and Freedom of Information Officer) was perceived as a ‘legal’ matter and assigned to the corporate solicitor.¹⁷⁸ In many government bodies, and county councils, responsibility went to DROs and county archivists because executive management recognised the records link.

paper, CP 03/01 August 2003; The National Archives, “Report on responses to The National Archives’ consultation paper CP03/01: Proposed National Records and Archives Legislation, Proposals to change the current legislative provision for records management and archives”, March 2004.

¹⁷³ Britannia Data Management, *BDM News*, vol 1, issue 1, 1987, p2, in CNT Records: 30/1/1/9.

¹⁷⁴ Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency, “Impact of Data Protection Legislation”, Information Technology (IT) Circular No 270, 19 September 1986, in CNT Records: 30/1/2/1.

¹⁷⁵ CNT Records: 30/1/1/1; Shelley Hardcastle, “From The Chair”, *Records Management Bulletin*, no 19, April 1987, p1; UK *Access to Personal Files Act, 1987*, Ch 37, London, HMSO, 1987. The Private Members Bill of Archie Kirkwood MP resulted in the Access to Personal Files Act, 1987 extending data protection to certain categories of paper records, and led to the Regulations when the Act came into force in 1989.

¹⁷⁶ CNT Records: 30/1/1/1.

¹⁷⁷ CNT Records: 30/1/2/1.

¹⁷⁸ The Act gives rights to those whose data is held – the data subjects, and details eight principles of good information handling for those who hold and process data – the data controllers. Organisations must have data management systems in place that meet the requirements of the Act and be able to demonstrate this to the Data Protection Commissioner. Following the Freedom of Information Act, 2000, the Data Protection Commissioner was given oversight of that legislation as well and renamed the Information Commissioner from 2002.

The Data Protection Act, 1998, had greater impact in CNT than the 1984 Act, but then only within a raft of Open Government legislation, initiatives and culture changes. These offered records managers an opportunity to promote good records management as it was now clear that organisations should be proactive about compliance. Getting data protection right before data collection would be critical to successful data management, and avoid the costs, time and embarrassment of correcting mistakes, and possible prosecution.

The UK Campaign for Freedom of Information began in 1984.¹⁷⁹ This was not welcomed by contemporary information practitioners who could dismiss conspiracy and secrecy theories from first-hand experience, and who could see wider implications. In 1986 the historian and Keeper of Public Records, Geoffrey Martin,¹⁸⁰

“agreed that the pressure for access often came from a minority sectional interest. It was clear that taken up by the public at large it would increase considerably the PRO’s workload. He referred back to an earlier observation he had made, that in reality most people were reluctant to dispose of really sensitive material. In the absence of public pressure to “reveal all”, it was very probable that sensitive material would be retained and so survive for historians to use.”¹⁸¹

A Canadian civil servant later confirmed that it was an (unsubstantiated) perception amongst officials that freedom of access impacted negatively on record-keeping as records were not now kept or meetings minuted.¹⁸²

Pressure built in the UK as the Open Government Initiative, following the 1993 White Paper (Cm 2290), eased access to official records, and Irish legislation in 1997 created interest. A Freedom of Information Act for England and Wales, enacted in 2000, took full effect from 2005. This lies outside the scope of this study, except to note that the growth in access requests and the implications of information legislation were recognised within CNT’s Records section by 1999, leading to a full-time post dedicated to requests.

Dealing with enquiries did not create formal records management in the case study organisations, but unco-ordinated and inconsistent responses and access arrangements resulted from its absence, and were addressed by its introduction. Chapter 6.5 examines how formal records management responded to information access. Most information access legislation came after professional

¹⁷⁹ Records Management Society, “Freedom of Information – Its impact on Records Management”, *Records Management Bulletin*, no 6, September 1984, pp1-2.

¹⁸⁰ Professor Geoffrey H Martin (born 1928) Keeper of Public Records (1982-88). *Who’s Who*, 2006, p1509.

¹⁸¹ Records Management Society, “Summary of June Meeting”, *Records Management Bulletin*, no 15, July 1986, p7.

¹⁸² Anne Brennan, “Canada’s Access to Information and Privacy Legislation”, presentation by Anne Brennan, Director of Information and Security Policy, Treasury Board of Canada, Secretariat, at “Access to Information 2003, 1st Annual Information Conference for the Public Sector”, Capita/ UCL The Constitution Unit, London, 14 May 2003 – Author’s Notes. The Canadian Access to Information Act and Privacy Act enacted in 1982 took effect in 1983.

records management was in place at CNT/EP. It was not therefore an impetus for introducing records management, but rather a justification for maintaining it, and, arguably, an impetus for improved resourcing to maximise the benefits to the information access regime of underpinning the quality, accuracy, identification, and appropriate retention and disposal of records and information contained therein.

5.6 SUMMARY

This chapter examined key factors that did or did not lead to introduction of records management in the case study: record-keeping; storage and disposal; technology; external influences; legislative requirements. An undercurrent of organisational change emerges, but the effects of that are specifically examined in Chapter 8.

Record-keeping

Until the 1970s, the bodies studied clearly recognised that current records and information required organisation, and initial office administration leaned towards central registries. Although not centrally co-ordinated across new towns, they followed similar filing practice, based on civil service guidance, common sense, and the preferences of their administrators. Records were managed in structured identification systems for storage and access, supporting business operations, accountability and, in the longer term, corporate memory. Registries were operated well by capable administrators but not qualified records managers. This was normal practice where, in the Jenkinsonian tradition, archivists and records managers applied themselves to sorting and selecting archival material from closed records, and 'records management' was regarded by many archival practitioners as relevant only to closed records in off-site records centres.¹⁸³

Registries offered a sound basis for life-cycle records management. However, current record-keeping in the new town bodies before 1992 did not operate within life-cycle records management, or emanate from, or lead to, formal professional records management. Bodies with organised registries did not attend so closely to closed records, usually resorting to unmanned stores. Furthermore, dilution or removal of registry practice, typically during organisational decentralisation, weakened or removed extant controls, and hampered development of comprehensive records management. Widespread poor quality records resulted, risking business efficiency and legal compliance. Those seeking to introduce formal records management in CNT from the late 1980s recognised that registry practice would have avoided or minimised problems in identifying and reviewing closed records. CNT used surviving corporation registry staff and premises as the nucleus for its records management staffing, premises and culture, but in an

¹⁸³ C Hilary Jenkinson (1882-1961) knighted 1949. Hilary Jenkinson, *A Manual Of Archive Administration*, re-issue of revised 2nd edition, Percy Lund, London, Humphries & Co, 1965; Chris Weir, "Sir Hilary Remembered", *Society of Archivists, The Newsletter*, no 100, July 1997, pp1-2; *Who Was Who*, 1961-70, p597.

opportunistic and disjointed way, and surprisingly omitted to reintroduce a headquarters registry. Lack of uniform registry across CNT offices brought disorganisation and inconsistency to record-keeping, which, apart from negative business effects, weakened CNT's ability to manage legacy records, particularly in accordance with legislation. This was less noticeable in 1961-82 as CNT was small, and filing in Glen House and its towns was organised if disparate. Problems grew as CNT matured, and expansion coincided with decentralisation and disorganised central and local record-keeping. Only after professional records management was introduced into CNT was life-cycle records management consolidated in one function.

Records Storage and Disposal

Storage was not generally a problem for organisations in their early years, unless they inherited records beyond capacity. Shortage of space did not in itself bring formal records management as, typically, administrators used available office space, and when that was exhausted, off-site locations. Organisation differed, but corporations and CNT managed in the short-term. Review and disposal was intermittent, localised, and responded to particular circumstances. Only Telford and Milton Keynes eventually combined storage with formal processes within manned records centres, space being only one consideration.

From the 1980s problems could be off-loaded to the growing commercial storage market. However, without formal records management to manage contracts, there could be a gap between requirements and service, and unnecessary expenditure – as CNT experienced. CNT did not undertake out-sourcing within an organised records management programme. Commercial storage did not provide records management, only rented space, and allowed CNT to ignore records. Perhaps rising costs would eventually have impacted, but for several years from 1982 storage was off management's agenda. No impetus arose until the PRO required review and disposal of expired records. CNT then realised it did not fully know what it possessed, and was not compliant with legislation. Attempts to apply records management from Glen House to the commercial situation failed, so CNT turned to an in-house alternative when opportunity allowed. Using a commercial records management solution attached to a record office, at TWAS, showed greater thought, and arose during formulation of formal records management at CNT. Nevertheless, factors behind it were still localised, reactive, and opportunistic – combining geographical convenience, dissatisfaction with the existing provider, and relationship-building with an archive repository.

Without in-house formal records management, storage and disposal was unplanned and disorganised, posing risks for archival selection and preservation. The bodies in the case study demonstrate reaction dictated by circumstance, and acceptance of the easy option, rather than long-term or ideal solutions. This approach can succeed in finite organisations, but encourages poor records management and associated risks of weakened business performance. It seems a misplaced approach when the life of finite organisations can be extended, as in the case study.

Also, whilst individual corporations could survive in this ad hoc manner, they cumulatively bequeathed problems to their residuary body, and CNT increasingly could not cope. Storage and disposal issues therefore contributed towards the need for formal records management in CNT, and became an impetus when combined with legislative requirements.

Technological Change

Changing technology affected organisational practices and diversified record formats. Staff often saw paper storage solutions in new technology, but did not apply records management to underpin that technology. New technology created records management issues around handling, storage, access to, disposal, and long-term preservation of new media. It contributed to an uncontrolled and unstable records environment – of deteriorating and superseded formats and media and of inaccessible or lost information – that would benefit from records management, but in itself did not bring about formal records management.

Workplace computers facilitated creation of records indices and improved searching and reporting, but automation came after records managers were already in place at MKDC and CNT (see Chapter 6). Again, formal records management was in place at CNT when electronic records became an issue at the end of the research period.

Technological change increased the range of records management work and the scope of its application, presenting practitioners with challenges and opportunities to increase their skills and knowledge and to guide and influence their organisations. In the 2000s, records management is integral to electronic document and records management system (EDRMS) solutions to Government requirements, although the attitude to electronic records in the 1990s, and the organisational context to date, did not bode well for significant workplace improvement.

Influence of External Bodies

The influence of key external bodies and individuals was instrumental in bringing formal records management to the case study. Peter Walne instigated the process. The PRO promoted public record status which would become the basis for formal records management activity. The ACA/NTA working party stimulated county archivist interest, and liaison regarding archival selection. However, such influence was slow and intermittent, and not the deciding factor. Professional bodies, and records management standards and theories, impacted in the case study after dedicated records management was emerging. External bodies and individuals could better exercise influence with a legislative framework and point of reference in place, although, as with the PRO, this influence was not necessarily actively exercised, but was reactive to interest *from* the new towns.

Legislative requirements

Between its foundation and 1984, without public records status, CNT performed little records management beyond filing and storage, unless forced by office closures to arrange disposals. Most corporations in the case study operated likewise. Public record status made CNT appoint a DRO, produce a policy, set up a records management unit and liaise with the PRO Inspecting Officer. This was gradual, equally due to the PRO's priorities and culture as to any CNT disinterest, but nevertheless it happened. The information access regime enhanced the effect of public records legislation by increasing CNT (and later EP) awareness of, and interest in, records and information management. There was wider realisation by non-Records staff of the benefits of indexing, reviewing and disposing of information.

Whilst all the factors examined indicate issues, situations, and risks, that benefited, or would benefit, from records management, legislation – even if imperfect or incomplete in formulation and application – appeared the key impetus for actually introducing, and maintaining, records management in the case study.

CHAPTER 6: IMPLEMENTING AND RESOURCING RECORDS MANAGEMENT

Having established in Chapter 5 the impetus for records management, Chapters 6 and 7 analyse implementation and resourcing of formal and professional records management at CNT from 1992, when CNT had inherited all allocated new towns. The case study illustrates several approaches – often hybrid – of centralised/decentralised structures, closed stage/life-cycle application, in-house/out-sourced storage and staffing, and part-time/full-time, non-professional/professional staffing. The implications of organisational ethos and attitudes are considered. These chapters explore successes and failures, and examine whether necessary elements for effective delivery of records management were present. Chapter 6 focuses upon issues and aspects of records management in its entirety, such as scope and staffing, and upon matters at the current stage of the records life-cycle such as registry activity. Chapter 7 follows on with examination of matters at the end of the life-cycle, such as disposition.

The key themes in Chapter 6 are:

- Scope and scale of the formal records management programme in CNT, and how and why it developed into a centralised, comprehensive, proactive, life-cycle function by 1999.
- Establishment, documentation and development of policy, influences upon it, and its impact.
- Revitalisation and sustainability of registry control in a changing organisation.
- Positive and negative aspects of automation.
- Promotion and marketing of records management.
- Staffing applied to formal records management, and its appropriateness.

6.1 SCOPING THE RECORDS MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME

Excepting Telford and Milton Keynes, with their records centres and professional archivists, records management was not a best practice or operational issue in corporations, but a necessity for wind-up and disposal. Harlow only considered appointment of an archivist because of impending closure.¹ Initially, there was reluctance even within MKDC to invest in sorting records. In 1983 the Acting Archivist, Leo Walsh, warned that if MKDC “wants adequate archives they must be made aware that it is an expensive service and it must not be postponed or temporarily evaded”, adding that a “development of the importance and magnitude of Milton Keynes, ought to have archives which will do it justice”.² Most corporations liaised with CNT and record offices through departmental or ex-staff. As their residuary body, CNT had greater opportunity than corporations to scope records management. However, CNT’s uncertain lifespan also made it reluctant to invest in comprehensive records management. After public record status

¹ Harlow DC/CNT: N22/5/B.

was awarded in 1984, CNT remained uncertain how to proceed. By 1987, as records intake increased, records management became accepted as an in-house function, although linked to administration and office management, with part-time and consultant resources.

CNT's position shifted in 1989-92 as the records task clarified, and large workloads, with records implications, arrived from Warrington and Runcorn, Telford, and Milton Keynes. The 1992 restructure incorporated a dedicated, full-time, in-house records management section, which remained, subject to re-organisations, thereafter. This allowed scoping of the nature and scale of records management in CNT, but in the context of organisational change, an assumed finite lifespan, and lack of status and resources for the function.

The Ethos of Records Management

At face value, the records management function within CNT's new Corporate Services directorate of 1992 merely consolidated the approach of the Glen House Records Management Unit since 1989, and lasted less than two years. However, it marked a watershed, as CNT controlled all English new town records, and records management became a recognisable term and function across CNT. At the first Records Management Meeting (RMM) in 1992, David Biggs defined the records life-cycle and related each stage to staff responsibilities.³ Records management became increasingly organised, improved and professionalised.

A Centralised or Decentralised Approach

CNT exemplifies both centralised and decentralised approaches to records management. The DRO from 1993 favoured a corporate, centralised approach to ensure control, compliance and implementation of life-cycle records management, but had to work within the overall organisational structure and imposed situations.

From 1992-93, the function was theoretically centralised, but in practice control was weak. All record officers reported to Hilary Moon, the Principal Administrative Officer (Records Management) and DRO at Headquarters, but those based in towns obtained many services locally. From 1993, officers reported separately for corporate and local issues. The Glen House unit continued its sole activity of managing deposits with BDM. Warrington's registry managed inherited systems of seven towns additional to a North Office system, with significant exclusions of departmental systems. Additionally, it ran basement and off-site storage of semi-current and closed records. Telford's section operated an out-store delivery service, a registry for mainly estates management files, and a deeds strongroom. In the new Milton Keynes section, the Records Officer prioritised a smooth transition from three separate MKDC services (records centre, registry and deeds strongroom) to a single department. The registry and strongroom were physically united, and security was improved by stopping self-service. A classification system

² MKDC: 1/15/4/1.

³ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

was devised for the new Property Services directorate.⁴ In Summer 1992 Moon appeared to envisage providing records services for Milton Keynes and London from the Milton Keynes Office at Saxon Court with an enlarged registry and down-sized, unmanned records centre at Stacey Bushes.⁵

During 1994-98 the function was de-centralised, with sections acting independently and reporting to local managers. The DRO maintained corporate co-ordination and PRO compliance via the RMM, but could only persuade colleagues to follow common practice, not instruct. The DRO was often perceived as Milton Keynes' records manager, which hindered good records management across CNT. The 1998 centralisation was incomplete in leaving Warrington and Telford records officers with local management. Staff changes and redundancies associated with the CNT/URA merger led to total centralisation of Records staff under the DRO by 2000.

The Records Management Programme

The new Records section within Corporate Services was created in 1992 without a formal programme. Policy, activities and services differed by site. In 1992 a Records Management Working Party on Automation, influenced by Glen House practice, suggested that "Working files should remain under the control of the user until they are passed to Records Management for storage".⁶ However, a life-cycle centralised approach soon emerged, firstly in the ambitious form of the "Three Year Plan", and then, more pragmatically, within resources available.

Moon presented records management as a three year project. Eight points were approved by Executive Management Group (EMG): a central catalogue in each office; computerised Records sections; Records to open and title all files; each discipline in each region to allocate a half day per month to reviewing; a standard clause in agreements and tender documents in regarding ownership and care of CNT records; records officers and relevant heads of service/executive officers to liaise regarding third party requests for information; a disclaimer system; a user friendly guide for all staff.⁷ In essence, a life-cycle approach was approved. However, even with executive authority, obtaining co-operation was difficult. For example, North Records took longer than expected to obtain departmental file lists in order to compile a central index.⁸

By late 1993 an external recruitment freeze and planned restructure led to acceptance that to "all intents and purposes, this is now a five year or 1998 plan", and the RMM agreed for example that

⁴ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

⁵ CNT Records: 30/1/1/1. See also Chapter 7.1.

⁶ CNT Records file: 30/1/2/3, "Records – General and Policy – Computers – CORA and Status", 1992-1998, EP Records Centre.

⁷ CNT Records: 30/1/1/1.

⁸ CNT North Office Records file: EST 1364.3, "Records Management Central Index – Computerisation", 1992-1999, consignments 1915/91/3, 3229/34/1-2, 3229/35/1, EP Records Centre.

closed records be prioritised for data-entry, to aid review.⁹ The “Three Year Plan” was derailed in the short- term, and its objectives suffered in the longer term, because the Records function was not placed in a sufficiently strong position to best implement them. The elements of the plan needed a corporate basis to embed them in organisational culture, and Records needed resources and empowerment to monitor and enforce. However, the plan successfully placed records management on the executive agenda, and its implementation received the highest authority. Many principles and objectives were taken forward.

The only time-constraint in the subsequent programme from 1993 was CNT’s expected closure in 1998. Records management was now presented as a core function, not a one-off project, and corporate, life-cycle, systematised records management was championed by a qualified records manager as DRO. When lack of resources undermined physical filing registries in 1993, David Biggs suggested intellectual control of departmental filing. He built on MKDC’s legacy to withdraw CNT from outsourced storage. He introduced service standards and trained staff, and felt that a records management department was key to wider organisational information management. He undertook activities such as deeds management, and enquiry and research activity increased.

The function survived through self-promotion and proving increasingly useful to the organisation. Some lack of understanding and co-operation continued amongst departmental staff.¹⁰ However, comprehensive records management helped embed it culturally, and make it relevant to departmental staff. The drawbacks were of resources not matching tasks, with staff stretched and vulnerable during organisational change and recruitment freezes. For example, emphasis on front-line registry activity to improve current records and provide a central index, diverted staff from review and disposal of closed records. However, focusing only on closed records would have left the function, as at MKDC, physically isolated from the rest of the organisation and detached from business processes and decision-making. Such peripheralisation may have increased the function’s vulnerability to under-resourcing and outsourcing.

During re-structuring of the organisation for 1998, Biggs used the opportunity to press his case, and capitalise on relationships built since 1992. He wrote to Howard Ruffman and Dennis Hone in 1996:

“Records management is integral to an organisation and is properly a corporate function. The regionalisation of records management staff in C.N.T. since 1993 has made implementation of Commission-wide records management policy and practice more difficult than it needed to be, has allowed inconsistencies between offices, and led to different reporting lines for Records staff.

...Good records management through the whole records life cycle is crucial to effective and economic business, which is why a central registry system which maintains

⁹ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

¹⁰ See for example the comment of the Warrington marketing officer in Chapter 5.1, page 126.

intellectual, if not physical, control of an organisation's records creation and keeping is more advantageous than decentralised laissez-faire.

Records management should be integrated with all other information management and administrative functions in a united and centralised department that services and advises the whole organisation with a uniform and consistent approach. The early indications that it is proposed in the post-1998 body to combine Records Management, Information Technology, Administration, Personnel, Legal and Finance into a corporate department is progressive, and bodes well for effective, efficient, and economic organisation in the new body.”¹¹

Decentralisation of records activity in the 1990s hindered consistent and effective control and application of records management policy and practice. The argument for a centralised, corporate function was won ahead of, and because of, the 1998 re-organisation. The 1997 Corporate Plan stated that “to centralise all CNT records at Stacey Bushes, Milton Keynes” was a key target.¹² The 1998 re-organisation achieved the best records management position in new town history. All closed records moved to Stacey Bushes, the UDC transfer was achieved, a corporate intellectual registry was created with total reclassification of CNT current files almost completed by close of 1998, and the section could begin a fully-resourced review programme. This was disrupted in 1999 by merging CNT with URA, a body without formal records management. Promoting and implementing records management had to recommence.

6.2 ESTABLISHING A POLICY

Policy Trends

CNT's records management policy developed in phases. In 1965-84, it was minimal and directed at resolving public record status and establishing guidelines via working parties – for retention/disposal in 1965, for centralisation in 1982, and with the ACA/NTA in 1982. In 1985-92 there was a shift to documenting policy and retention scheduling and establishing a records management unit. Following transfer of records from corporations, policy in 1992-98 was to consolidate and maintain the formal function and manage records in the context of organisational change and expected closure. Policy was adapted in 1998 to address a rationalised establishment, corporate-wide classification, and transfers of UDCs and HATs. Policy from 1999 required response to a merger with an organisation without discernible records management.

The need for a Records Policy Document

Research has not uncovered any over-arching organisational policy document in the corporations. Records discussions occurred in minutes of meetings. There were forms and registry memoranda on filing practices, and Telford had a records centre guide.

With CNT's status unresolved, the guidance of 1966 and 1982 sufficed. Increased corporation transfers from 1985 revealed the gaps. The Records Policy Document produced in 1987 was

¹¹ CNT Records: 30/1/1/1.

basic, mostly concerned retention, and soon became outdated. When the National Audit Office advised against destruction of disposal files at one year old, corporations were instructed in 1988 to disregard the section regarding property management files, and the PRO were informed that the document would be amended.¹³ No sooner was it rewritten than it required reconsideration in the light of the Joint Circular relating to Tenants Choice and the Housing (Change of Landlord) Regulations 1989, which required records to be retained in the event that bids were received from housing associations. This was felt to have “considerable implications for CNT’s records management policy on housing-related records and DDFALS intended to issue new guidelines shortly”.¹⁴ The Records Policy Document Supplement of 1989 was issued.

Both 1987 and 1989 documents were considered ineffective by 1991, when a working party on automation stated that:

“A policy document on records management needs to be issued by senior management so that CNT staff take the subject seriously. At present CNT has a colossal problem which can only be described as a shambles caused by years of neglect. There have been a number of attempts to tackle the problem which have died through a lack of commitment from senior management. Further effort will be wasted unless the necessary commitment now exists.”¹⁵

In 1993 records officers described existing policy as “only general”, failing to cover many records needing review.¹⁶ Biggs decided to update policy and involved departmental representatives, the PRO and the County Archivist of Northamptonshire to represent local archivists.¹⁷ The resulting document – the “RPD” – was comprehensive and detailed, including contextual information, procedures, and a generic retention schedule, and formed a key response to the 1994 restructuring. The Director of Personnel and Management Services (DPMS) “stressed the need to delegate records management to CNT’s specialist team, especially in view of the acute pressure on the repositories.”¹⁸ Crucially, it was agreed that the RPD “is taken as authority to dispose of records under that document without the permission of managers etc.” and that it could be amended in future without further Executive Management Group (EMG) authority. The finished product was distributed to senior managers, simultaneously with a records management “User Friendly Guide” to all staff.¹⁹ At Milton Keynes, briefing sessions for all staff by the DRO were made mandatory by the local director.

¹² CNT Records: 30/1/14.

¹³ CNT Glen House: N22/2; CNT Records: 30/1/3/1.

¹⁴ CNT Records: 30/1/1/1.

¹⁵ CNT Records: 30/1/2/3.

¹⁶ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

¹⁷ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2; Northamptonshire RO: Box File.

¹⁸ CNT Glen House file: “DPMS Records Mgt Papers”, 1988-1992, EP Records Centre.

¹⁹ CNT Records file: 30/1/1/3, “Records – General and Policy – Records Management – Annual Reports”, 1992-1998, EP Records Centre; CNT Records file: 30/1/1/4, “Records – General and Policy – Records Management – User Friendly Guide”, 1992-1998, EP Records Centre; CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

In 1995 Biggs optimistically suggested an annual review of the RPD. Instead, a sub-committee in 1997 re-examined the RPD, seeking to reduce retention periods. Most departments consulted wanted no change, or increased retention periods.²⁰ The revised 1998 RPD incorporated a Deeds Management Policy. The principle of a written records management policy was established and survived the URA merger. Subsequent editions were named the Records and Information Policy Document (RIPD) to reflect the broadening scope of records management.

Monitoring Policy

In 1992, at the first meeting of what became known as the Records Management Meeting (RMM), the primary topic was “Discussion CNT Records policy and related matters”.²¹ There had been records meetings before, but this was the first gathering of dedicated staff, and became the standing forum for co-ordinating records management policy and activity across the regions. It met intermittently after 1999 due to lack of attendance by senior staff following the URA merger, and following centralisation of records management which gave the forum less purpose.

Initial meetings shared ideas and information, for instance on forms and labels. The RMM progressively strengthened the DRO’s position and provided a corporate counter-balance to regionalisation. The agenda was standardised from 1993. From 1995 the DRO chaired meetings. From 1996 minutes were circulated to the Chief Executive and directors “in order to raise awareness of records activities and issues”.²² From 1997 the chairman produced minutes instead of the host office, and membership was broadened to include IT and Legal representatives. In 1998, when EMG considered the role of professional groups, the RMM was continued as a quarterly forum.

Progress was also monitored via Internal Audit reports. Records staff felt they received more inspections than other functions, and had to justify their existence. However, the first report in 1994 helped the DRO to co-ordinate officers by recommending that Milton Keynes practices be applied to all sections.²³ He recommended that if “you can pull all the departments into an overall classification system devised by Records, as done at Milton Keynes, so much the better.”²⁴

CNT Records benefited from discussing policy and practice with the PRO as an external body. The PRO monitored organisational progress and compliance with records management to which management could be referred. Periodically, reporting was formalised, into annual returns of

²⁰ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

²¹ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

²² CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

²³ “Audit Report 4010 – Records Management, 1994”, in CNT Records: 30/1/1/1.

²⁴ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

Departmental Records Work by the DRO from 1993-94, and Annual Planning and Review Frameworks in the late 1990s.²⁵

6.3 ESTABLISHING REGISTRY CONTROL

Chapter 5 explained that decentralisation weakened current record keeping systems, and led to records in variable conditions. This situation multiplied as an inheritance for CNT by 1992, in addition to its own mixed record-keeping.

The PRO specified a registry involvement for DROs and set out requirements for registry practice.²⁶ Whilst Moon was unable or unwilling to re-establish a physical registry at Glen House in 1987-92, and the opportunity to introduce central registration across CNT was not taken in the 1992 re-organisation, she recognised registry benefits. In 1991 the Records Unit stated that all current files should be entered onto a records computer system whilst acknowledging that “This is a far more difficult task with the devolved filing system currently in operation than if there existed a centralised file registry”.²⁷ In 1992 the Head of Corporate Services “agreed that Central Registry control by computer was the key to solving many records problems. This would enable Registry to control the opening of all new files”, but “had reservations about Central Registry take-over of all semi-current departmental files. Attempts to achieve this should be undertaken with tact.”²⁸

In contrast to Glen House, Moon fostered physical registries in local offices, capitalising on former corporation registries that had survived to varying degrees. In 1992 she encouraged Biggs to expand the Milton Keynes registry, which already held 18,636 files.²⁹ Including registry in the records management function allowed improved record creation to assist with identification and accessibility through the life cycle. Filing activity gave Records staff greater interaction with departmental staff than the MKDC archivists who were rarely seen outside the records centre. As DRO, Biggs maintained this principle through the 1990s, and protected the registry concept when most at risk in the 1994 reorganisation.

Resurrecting and expanding a physical registry

From 1992 at Milton Keynes Biggs provided a proactive customer-focused service. He expanded the registry inherited from MKDC through reincorporating decentralised files, creation of new classification systems, and raising staff awareness and co-operation. Success resulted in 1993

²⁵ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2; 30/1/1/3.

²⁶ Public Record Office, “Manual”, 1993, section 2.1.5, np.

²⁷ CNT Records: 30/1/2/1.

²⁸ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

²⁹ CNT Records: 30/2/1/1.

when Planning and Architecture moved current files, and Land Information Systems moved semi-current records, into Registry.³⁰

However, registration remained inconsistent across CNT, and some decentralised areas resisted. Feedback from classification of Engineering files at Milton Keynes indicated that staff were “generally responding positively” and filing had “become easier and more accurate”, but “there appears to be reluctance to remove files from office space”. A devolved arrangement whereby live files remained in the department but references and controls were provided by Registry worked satisfactorily, and provided the model for intellectual registry and records liaison officers which Biggs produced for the 1994 re-organisation.³¹

Cannibalisation and confusion of new town files, and the ongoing effects of organisational change in CNT upon record-keeping, became increasingly apparent. Biggs decided that files should close when offices and functions closed. If the subject matter was continued by another organisation or function a new file should be opened. This preserved provenance and made identification and review easier. He argued that whilst a user might want all information in one file, having two or more files was no different to closing a file part because of size. Practice outside of his control remained varied. Glen House failed to tackle current files, even when departmental staff sought assistance.³² Telford and Warrington continued registries but did not classify decentralised areas.³³

Creating an intellectual registry

Staff cuts in 1994 halted the progress of physical registries. Records Manager (North) described “the outcome of this free-for-all as chaotic”, saying that it had taken “several years and a team of totally dedicated workers to bring order to the chaos that was Records. I have been under the impression that you approved of our achievements and recognise the crucial role of the central registry”. While departmental record-keeping could reduce Records posts, management did not seem to realise the implications. Regional directors with registries did not actually want to lose them, and expected them to continue.³⁴

Local management approved David Biggs’s proposals for operating his Milton Keynes section, and from April 1994 departmental staff filed upon, and booked-out, registry files for themselves. Records retained intellectual control by continuing to issue file numbers. “Records Liaison Officers” (RLOs) were created and meetings instigated to adapt classification systems, and explain policy and procedures. All but two Records staff relocated to the records centre. Deeds

³⁰ CNT Records: 30/1/1/3.

³¹ CNT Records: 30/1/1/3.

³² CNT Records file: 30/3/1/12, “Records – Departmental – Corporate – DPMS”, 1992-1998, EP Records Centre.

³³ CNT North Office departmental file: CLSM 464, “Records Management”, 1993-1997, consignment 3282/23/1, EP Records Centre.

³⁴ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

strongroom opening times were reduced, and eventually responsibility passed to Legal in 1994. The DRO recommended this model to fellow record officers. It was adopted by both North and West Midlands, with local variations. As Glen House Records had never performed registry work, it did not implement an intellectual registry. South Office management was slow to agree the concept of RLOs, and then unrealistically appointed just one between all Land Agency teams.³⁵

Lack of resources forced a move to intellectual registry. This gave a semblance of de-centralisation and departmental control whilst maintaining central overview, so avoiding the damaging decentralisation experience of the 1970s and 1980s. This involved considerable Records guidance due to the competing priorities of departmental staff charged with physical maintenance of current files. To ensure success, Biggs and Ruffman stated that classification systems and file-opening via Records should be enforced. In 1996 Biggs urged North and West Midlands records officers to be more proactive as it “is important to the records life cycle and to the ultimate review and disposition of the records that the records are created and controlled correctly at the current stage.” Both replied that they lacked staff. The DRO was unable to enforce compliance.³⁶

Milton Keynes filing themes were developed in 1994-96. Successful implementation depended on individual staff, particularly managers. The Audit Manager wanted “to fit into your system and keep my records in good order”.³⁷ In contrast, the Marketing Directorate delayed discussions for two years and then did not implement the draft before 1998. Biggs found there much duplication and “day files and ephemera which do not need to be registered.”³⁸

Intellectual registry at Glen House was introduced from 1996 following closure of its Records unit. Record-keeping had generally been poor since the 1980s. Semi-current files sent into closed storage caused high retrieval levels. Disbanding corporate teams for South Office multi-disciplinary teams in 1994 caused diverse filing methods. Given the complications, together with less than two years to Glen House closure, new systems were not implemented. Instead, RLOs were to provide information on file creation to at least ensure a central record of holdings.³⁹

Organisation-wide Registration

Records management involvement in current record-keeping in 1992-98 showed that whilst some individuals did not want “their” records to be organised, most staff obliged. Through service delivery, communication, and relationship-building the registry approach worked, and played a

³⁵ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

³⁶ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

³⁷ CNT Records file: 30/3/1/5, “Records – Departmental – Corporate – Audit”, 1992-1998, EP Records Centre.

³⁸ CNT Records: 30/3/1/4.

³⁹ CNT Records file: 30/3/4/5, “Records – Departmental – South (Glen House) – 1998 (Sectional)”, 1992-1998, EP Records Centre.

key role in fashioning records management into a corporate, centralised, life-cycle function relevant to daily business operations and workflow.

Hence, when the 1998 reorganisation brought the greatest opportunity to realise the intellectual central registry, it was recognised by management and staff. In 1996 Biggs advocated devising registry systems for the new body immediately the structure was known, and opening new files to avoid repeating CNT's previous errors in continuing to use files from corporations or after departmental reorganisations.⁴⁰ In 1998 he explained to all staff that to:

“mark the distinction between the old and new organisation, and to overcome the serious problems posed by the multitude of past filing systems and ‘non-systems’, the Commission’s filing needs have been rationalised into 17 new reference themes to be used from 1st April.”

To “preserve the provenance and integrity of UDC files they must not be filed upon by CNT staff... The same principles will apply to the HAT records in due course.”⁴¹

6.4 AUTOMATION⁴²

American records managers embraced new technology from the late 1970s.⁴³ From the mid-1980s computers were increasingly utilised by UK practitioners for cataloguing and indexing.⁴⁴ Quick access and searching capacity was key to successful retrieval, and assisted appraisal. This case study confirmed that automation improved services and encouraged departmental staff to recognise the value of the records centre, to release records from their immediate control, and to trust Records to retrieve records speedily. Automation, where managed by professional records managers, enabled warehouse storage to evolve into a technical and professional records centre and operate on a larger scale than if solely dependent upon manual finding aids and staff knowledge. Automation was crucial to MKDC's successful records centre.

Most corporations closed before automation was widely available. It is doubtful whether they would have applied it to current records. Even MKDC did not automate registry work in parallel with its records centre. Manual processes were the registry norm into the 1990s. Even after registry and records centre functions were combined at CNT Milton Keynes, file and deed packet

⁴⁰ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

⁴¹ CNT Records: 30/1/24.

⁴² Unless otherwise specified, all information for this section is drawn from CNT Records files: 30/1/2/1-12, “Records – General and Policy – Computers” (12 sub files), 1992-1998, EP Records Centre; CNT Records: 30/1/1/1-3.

⁴³ At the 1978 annual conference of the Association of Records Managers and Administrators (ARMA) 84% of sessions were devoted to paperwork management and 16% to data and word processing, micrographics and the “office of the future”. In 1983 it devoted 33% to new technology and 24% to paperwork. Professional and management development featured in 30% of sessions. Derek Charman, “Records Management as an Economic Concept”, *Records Management Bulletin*, no 2, January 1984, pp 2-3.

⁴⁴ David Haynes, “Automated Systems for Files Control”, *Records Management Bulletin*, no 32, June 1989, pp10-11.

labels were type-written until file-creation was automated. Yet, automation of records management by the MKDC archivists, by the CNT Records department, and by the only UDC with a dedicated records management function (LDDC) showed that it emerged from a considered and professional records management approach. Automation was a key tool for successful implementation of CNT's formal records management from 1992, and enabled adaptation to changing situations. It was used from 1995 to support the new RLOs. Allowing read-only access to the records computer system "helps them to be more accurate with their requests". Restricting access to RLOs "reinforced their position as the point of contact on records matters."

Nevertheless, case study data highlights the need for careful investment, effective system administration, and, specifically, controlled and resourced data-entry. Automation was successful at MKDC in 1986-92 because it was on one site to manage records of one town and organisation, and received necessary investment. The parallel CNT experience was more complex, due to greater quantity and diversity of records, more sites, and PRO compliance considerations. Also, initially there was no overall IT strategy within which to fit a records management computer programme.

Selection and Procurement

Procuring an appropriate system is important given financial outlay, long-term implications, limited market availability, and budget constraints. Selection benefits from technical and business acumen which Records staff lacked in the 1980s and early 1990s when computer literacy was unusual.

MKDC's Records Centre was automated in early 1986, when a Wang personal computer with a 30mb disk was purchased to accommodate an estimated 50,000 records. MKDC's IT Unit wrote a search programme by subject and department reference which also controlled issue of loans. By 1988 the disk was full. The IT Unit (now a privatised consultancy) provided a temporary overflow pc. In 1990 the Wang was replaced with a Compaq 386 pc with a 300 mb hard disk and DataEase software. DataEase was selected over CAIRS and Dbase III+ because menus, reports and forms could be customised without supplier assistance. The system allowed retention scheduling, and free-text searching. It could not search across all sections of data together, and ultimate capacity was questionable. A disaster recovery plan was in place by 1991.⁴⁵

In contrast, CNT had no workable system in the 1980s. The estates database was a precedent. In 1981 the Chief Estates Officer wanted to rationalise estate records and terriers for centralisation, resulting eventually in the Ermis system, replaced in 1993 by the Assets Database.⁴⁶ The

⁴⁵ CNT Records: 30/1/2/2, "Records – General and Policy – Computers – Data Ease", 1992-1998, EP Records Centre.

⁴⁶ CNT Hemel Hempstead: 01/5/13; CNT Records: 30/1/2/6, "Records – General and Policy – Computers – Assets Database", 1992-1998, EP Records Centre.

Executive Officer at Washington was keen in 1988 to computerise Washington and Aycliffe and Peterlee because, with the exception of Washington's Central Registry, they were disordered, and without a current terrier for Aycliffe Peterlee to support the community related asset (CRA) packages. This localised request was opposed by Field wishing to address the larger picture, agree indexing criteria with the PRO and avoid duplication. Also, Field was "anxious that no details are placed on computer which relate to papers which are to be destroyed". Instead, consultant Peter Lane sorted Aycliffe Peterlee records manually.⁴⁷

Moon investigated computer products and users from 1988 to 1990. She obtained examples of CNT lists and card indices to see what required input, and hoped to put all live, closed and deposited records into an integrated system. Back-capture of information was considered the main problem, but all files needed labelling and more detailed lists. Moon was receptive to latest technology. She looked, for example, at MKDC's LIS digital mapping.⁴⁸ In 1992 she suggested that optical disk storage would be best.

In 1990 Moon's preference for BRS Search was deemed too complicated by the Director of Finance Administrative and Legal Services. The consultant Computer Manager favoured flexibility of text retrieval to hold one or two million entries. Moon investigated the text-retrieval product, CORA (Control of Registries and Archives), and in 1990 CNT purchased it.⁴⁹ CORA was initially installed in Glen House Records with the intention that it would be networked. Also there was discussion regarding implementation at North and Telford offices in 1991. By December CORA had not met specification, and Records was provided with an interim DataFlex measure. This did not deter Records staff, although it was the first of many problems. In spite of these, Harwell⁵⁰ publicised CNT's adoption of CORA.⁵¹

Unresolved problems remained four years later. Moon, Hadingham and the new Systems Development Manager, Barry Mason, constituted a Records Management Working Party on Automation in 1992. The appointment of an in-house IT manager, within the same directorate as

⁴⁷ CNT Records: 30/4/21.

⁴⁸ CNT Records: 30/3/2/21.

⁴⁹ The UK Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA) developed the STATUS information storage and text retrieval software program, and a database called CARA (Control of Authority Registries and Archives) was developed for its DRO by 1984. The privatised Harwell Computer Power Ltd was formed in 1987 to market STATUS, and a CORA database (Control of Registries and Archives). Harwell launched Status/IQ in 1989 where IQ ranked the importance of every piece of text retrieved and searched for the "nearly relevant" rather than give a null response to an exact search. Vivienne Martin, "Computerisation of UKAEA Records", *Records Management Bulletin*, no 8, January 1985, p3; Jayne Pearsall, "Status/IQ – The Latest Generation?", *Records Management Bulletin*, no 32, June 1989, pp7-9; Records Management Society, "New Status Consultancy Service From Harwell Computer Power", *Records Management Bulletin*, no 21, August 1987 p4.

⁵⁰ Harwell was renamed Status IQ in 1994. Status IQ was taken over by DataWare, and subsequently by Solcara.

⁵¹ Aslib, The Association for Information Management, *Aslib Information*, 19, no 5, May 1991 pp178-180.

Records, led to a specification for a system to record all records in all formats, with location-tracking, a file-naming convention, and notes. There were to be common facilities at each location on a linked network between sites, and scanning of board minutes. Biggs recognised that CNT needed a bigger system than MKDC, but felt that DataEase was a “quite sophisticated and user-friendly” proven system that could be adapted in-house, whilst CORA was dependent upon the supplier. The Executive Management Group (EMG) agreed the “need for a common computer system for records management”.⁵² CNT had an existing relationship with Harwell, and was attracted by suggestions of handling large volumes of data, free text retrieval, and quick response. In late 1992, in the absence of Moon, Mason moved Records to CORA.

Implementation Issues

The need for careful specification and procurement was reinforced by the experience of implementation and subsequent support. CNT became concerned at turnover in the provider’s staff, and the limited number of technicians able to support CORA. After installation in 1993, CNT complained of “sluggishness”, which the supplier attributed to CNT not using the most appropriate operating system. Conversion problems included the loss of over 20,000 records at Milton Keynes, and staff continued DataEase to operate the records centre. As data-entry was interrupted, a backlog built up at Milton Keynes for the first time. The “general view was of dissatisfaction and distrust of the system”. Records staff considered changing the system, but too much had been invested, and enhancements had to be secured instead in 1994-96. The closure of Glen House Records necessitated changes to CORA, data transfer, and extra hardware at Stacey Bushes.⁵³

By 1994 thoughts were already turning to adapting CORA to residual requirements. North Office’s Records and Residuals Manager felt that for closure it was more important to enter current records on CORA, reflecting non-records managers’ concern for current business and succession planning rather than review and disposal of closed records. With CNT’s continuation, alternative systems were examined, but on grounds of cost and Windows compatibility, an enhanced system, CORA 2, went live in April 1998. A centralised system under single control was easier to monitor.

Data-Entry Issues

Quality-control and consistent standards are paramount to retrieval and user-satisfaction and confidence, and require appropriate quantity and quality of data-entry staff, and careful preparation of data, especially that resulting from poor record-keeping. When MKDC staff hurriedly entered data in 1986 they copied incorrect file labels. No type-checking occurred. Standards improved from 1988.

⁵² CNT Glen House: AG 21.

⁵³ CNT Records: 30/1/2/1.

CNT Glen House Records was exercised in 1989 by poor and inaccurate file titles on finding aids for its commercial storage holdings, and hundreds of files were missing due to unrecorded loans.⁵⁴ Record details were not standardised, such as whether to delete entries of destroyed records (MKDC's policy in 1988-92). CNT initially took this view, as in 1988 Field had "been advised that it is not sensible to put on computer details of records which will be destroyed.... it seems advisable for the identification and indexing work to be completed before records are computerised".⁵⁵ At CNT from 1992 Biggs felt it important to keep an audit trail, so he reversed deletion of 'lost' files, and chased overdue loans which resulted in returns of files out on loan since 1986. This proved good preparation for the information access regime from 2000.

Another inconsistency was that North and Telford input current records, but Milton Keynes input closed records. When the function was centralised in 1998 Milton Keynes staff found multiple CORA entries because North and Telford re-entered records at closure rather than edit extant data. Input-control problems multiplied across several locations, employing varying styles through the 1990s. A RMM sub-group in 1995 produced consistent inputting and terminology guidelines, but they were ineffective because they could not be centrally-policed.

At MKDC a part-time clerk/typist was employed in 1988-92 for data-entry. CNT's problem was a far greater quantity of data, from twenty three organisations, and at different sites, and without the resources to match the task. Temporary inputters were used, but regional funding was inconsistent. Also, North Records regarded data-inputting as an additional task. If extra staff were unavailable, inputting stopped, creating large backlogs. In 1996 Telford found reviewing was slowed as data had to be entered as records were reviewed.

Wider automation

Departments automated from the 1970s. This created records management issues as computer systems held electronic information or records, which would not necessarily reach the records centre for assessment. Records asked for inclusion of electronic records considerations, such as version control, in new systems like the 1998 Documents Database which allowed organisation-wide publishing and updating of key public documents.

Records management applications increased, and CNT/EP used several different ones by 1999 to automate deeds management, file registration and label creation, records centre space management, and consignment number issue. The post-1998 Records section took a leading role in developing a corporate image library. Computer user groups from 1993 helped build relationships between Records and other disciplines. They also helped the DRO to gather information on organisational systems in accordance with PRO instructions.

⁵⁴ CNT Records: 30/3/1/3.

⁵⁵ CNT Records: 30/4/21.

6.5 ACCESS

Provision of external access to information became a daily task for the records management function by the end of the case study. The accuracy, consistency, and accountability of response to enquiries rely upon the overall quality of controls and systems exercised. In the case study, information access became a major influence upon business conduct and records management, and the formal records management function responded by systematising access.

Good records management was key to information access. Poor records management could delay responses. Excuses were made by departmental staff to cover potential delays. In 1994 a Glen House employee stated in a holding letter:

“...it is necessary to identify and retrieve the relevant Development Corporation files transferred to us and now place [sic] in archive. I am afraid this may take some little time...”

The same month the Principal Legal Officer told the Local Government Ombudsman that:

“My difficulty is that the complete housing records of the PDC are not immediately available to me and it may be some time before I am able to obtain these from some or all of the likely locations.”⁵⁶

The development of CNT's formal records management, and transfer of Glen House records management to Milton Keynes in 1996, eased this. Stacey Bushes Records Centre had finding aids and retrieved files within a maximum of twenty four hours for internal staff.

Types of Access

External requests mainly emanated from students and academics (stimulated especially by the high-profile planning and regeneration work of Milton Keynes and London Docklands); solicitors seeking planning authorisations on behalf of house purchasers in new town designated areas; owners wanting building plans; housing authorities seeking confirmation of tenancy dates.⁵⁷ Occasionally, there were requests from those with grievances. Local authorities often referred enquiries to CNT even when they held the required information. Certain events generated requests, such as the 50th anniversary of the New Towns Act in 1996. CNT's expected closure in 1998 caused a misconception that records would be lost. Some people associated organisational change with loss of records, yet did not appreciate the role of a records management function within an organisation to manage closure and prevent loss.

⁵⁶ Peterborough DC/CNT: 12007.

⁵⁷ Where a tenant had bought their house from a development corporation, then returned to renting under a public authority, and then wanted a right to buy a house for a second time. The amount of discount allowed a second time was less and a housing authority needed to know what was granted the first time.

Changes in Access Levels

Enquiries increased with CNT's growth as a residuary body. More records passing into closed storage, together with reorganisations and staff departures, reduced departmental ability and motivation to respond directly. Increased public awareness of, and interest in, available records, greater referral by local authorities, and more openness due to the Citizen's Charter of 1991, the Open Government Initiative in 1994 and the Freedom of Information Act, 2000, led eventually to public advertisement of records holdings on EP's corporate web site.⁵⁸

Records initially resented enquiries as "time-consuming and difficult to deal with, as staff and systems are not geared up to serving the public" and considered itself "being used as an information service" and "research facility". The RMM in 1995 "reaffirmed that they did not have the remit or resources to provide such a service, and that enquiries interfered with priorities".⁵⁹ By the end of the study period, external enquiries received in Records averaged thirty to forty each month, which, combined with information access regime requirements, justified a dedicated enquiries officer post.⁶⁰

Establishing a Control Mechanism

Access requests involved two areas – current records held on CNT premises, and those in deposited collections, access to which required CNT permission. One of the attractions for CNT in 1965 of public record status was confidentiality provided by official closure periods.⁶¹ CNT did not make significant deposits until the 1982 centralisation, and consequently began to receive related access requests from 1983. The response to "bona fide research students and similar" was "to be accommodating subject to confidentiality (eg. not generally less than 10 years) and avoiding indiscriminate or random trawling through files or records."⁶² From 1993 the DRO tried to define and regulate privileged access procedures as policy differed across offices. Inconsistency increased when regionalisation meant that officers "could answer requests/queries from outside bodies locally".⁶³ Generally, the DRO succeeded in ensuring he co-ordinated record office access requests, although one county archivist preferred to make decisions herself, declaring the privileged access procedure to be "multiplying bits of paper".⁶⁴

⁵⁸ UK The Prime Minister, *The Citizen's Charter, Raising The Standard, presented to Parliament by the Prime Minister by command of Her Majesty*, London, HMSO, 1991 (Cm 1599); CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

⁵⁹ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

⁶⁰ CNT Records file: 30/1/20, "Records – General and Policy – Enquiries from Public", 1992-1998, EP Records Centre; CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

⁶¹ CNT Glen House: N22/2.

⁶² CNT Glen House: N22/2.

⁶³ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2; Northamptonshire RO: Box File.

⁶⁴ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2; CNT Records file: 30/1/21/11, "Records – General and Policy – County Archivists – Northamptonshire Record Office, 1992-1998, EP Records Centre.

Departmental staff often dealt with records-related external enquiries. In 1996 Buckinghamshire County Council engineers refused to accept that CNT records they wanted were public records. They were allowed to view, then, under departmental pressure, to borrow. When pressed for return, the files were “lost”, and the borrower had left the council.⁶⁵ Uncontrolled departmental responses were reduced by promoting the role of Records in responding to records-related enquiries.

Access to deposited records in 1994-95 for compilation of a New Towns CD-ROM by the Planning Exchange demonstrated various difficulties – lack of both communication by internal project managers with the Records function, and lack of central co-ordination, plus disregard for safety and security of records.⁶⁶ This reflected the weakness of the formal records management function, and its dilution in the regionalised structure. Marketing staff, without consulting the DRO, authorised the Planning Exchange to remove material from record offices. Public records status was sufficient for the County Archivist of Northamptonshire to refuse. Others expressed reluctance, and by September 1995 the PRO voiced concern.⁶⁷ Durham and TWAS were advised that CNT understood that archivists might feel records should be copied rather than loaned.⁶⁸ A corporate centralised records function might have been consulted, and agreed proper arrangements in advance.

Changes in Access Policy

Until the 1990s, in keeping with prevalent government culture, new town bodies made few records available publicly. Access requests posed no problem for organisations when they could be the final arbiters. External enquiries at MKDC’s records centre were discouraged.⁶⁹ The CNT records management regime before 1994 continued likewise. Rejuvenation of CNT’s relationship with the PRO in 1993 heightened awareness of the thirty year rule. The general position of the RMM in 1994 was that:

“It was agreed that enquiries from the public for information and privileged access to records should be discouraged, unless they were of great benefit to CNT. Records staff do not have the resources for the research and supervision these requests involve. Also, privileged access is a complex issue in itself, with implications for future access.”

and again in 1995 “because of the resources required to vet and administer privileged access, the Records Management Meeting did feel that this should be bestowed on requests which would promote or benefit CNT. The Public Record Office supported this.” Despite this, Records staff,

⁶⁵ CNT Records file: 30/3/2/8, “Records – Departmental – Central (Milton Keynes) – Disengagement”, 1992-1998, EP Records Centre; CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

⁶⁶ Planning Exchange was an independent not-for-profit organisation funded by membership subscriptions, providing information to public and private organisations in the UK on urban and rural development.

⁶⁷ Northamptonshire RO: Box File; CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

⁶⁸ CNT Records: 30/1/21/13, “Records – General and Policy – County Archivists – Tyne and Wear Archives Service”, 1992-1998, EP Records Centre.

⁶⁹ CNT Records: 30/1/20.

especially when operating in the decentralised structure, were unable to prevent access for local interests. For instance, a former MKDC director received permission to research board papers in 1994 and 1996.⁷⁰

The *Code of Practice on Access to Government Information*, first issued in 1994, followed on from the Government's Citizen's Charter initiative of 1991, and the 1993 White Paper on Open Government (Cm 2290).⁷¹ From 1994 more information was released by Records staff than withheld, but there remained conflict with the Public Records Act closure provisions until the Freedom of Information Act took full effect in 2005. An Ombudsman case in 1997 highlighted difficulties when a complaint about CNT's refusal to disclose certain records on the basis of the Thirty Year Rule revealed misunderstanding of the Public Records Act among non-records managers. As a result, CNT adopted the *Code*, about which it seemed not to have been formally notified in 1994, and officers were "examining, as a matter of urgency, our Records Management Policy to see that this accords with the Code and the legislative requirements. A meeting will be held ...to clarify the Public Records Act provisions to ensure our policy and practice is compliant with that statute and the Code provisions."⁷² The thirty year closure period applied to all records deposited in the PRO or place of deposit unless previously opened to public access. Records over thirty years old were accessible. Wherever held, records under thirty years old were subject to the *Code of Practice*. Whilst records remained with CNT, public access was a matter of discretion but should be considered in the light of the Code. Since this accorded with CNT's records management policy and practice, no changes were required. In 1998 Biggs "summarised the impact of Open Government for C.N.T. as a shift in emphasis from: C.N.T. will not allow access without a good reason so to do, to: C.N.T. will allow access unless there is a good reason not to so do."⁷³

A *Guardian* article in January 1998 attacked government "censorship" and demanded that section 3(4) of the Public Records Act 1958 – which states that "any records may be retained...if, in the opinion of the person responsible for them, they are required for administrative purposes or ought to be retained for any other special reason..." – "must go". The journalist vilified DROs. "The PRO is not to blame; their staff take instruction from Whitehall, specifically from Departmental Record Officers. They are a law unto themselves. They can decide which documents should be sent to Kew, which should be disclosed, and even which should be destroyed." Although aiming

⁷⁰ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

⁷¹ UK Cabinet Office, *Open Government Code of Practice on Access to Government Information*, 2nd edition, London, TSO, 1997.

⁷² CNT Records file: 30/1/21/15, "Records – General and Policy – County Archivists – Other Record Offices", 1992-1998, EP Records Centre; CNT Records: 30/3/1/8; CNT Records file: 30/3/2/6, "Records – Departmental – Central (Milton Keynes) – Central Region Executive Committee (CRX)", 1992-1998, EP Records Centre.

⁷³ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2; CNT Records file: 30/1/15, "Records – General and Policy – Open Government", 1992-1998, EP Records Centre.

to uncover perceived secrecy, such attacks failed to recognise that most work and records were routine, and most DROs had junior positions.⁷⁴

With transition to openness, external enquiries became an integral activity within the CNT/EP corporate, centralised, records management function. Departmental staff addressing enquiries individually, risked breaches of service standards, data protection, and copyright, and provision of misinformation. Records staff could not prevent this, but from 1998 they minimised risks, and records management became central to EP's management of the Freedom of Information regime.

Specific Access Issues

Two issues associated with access which exercised records management staff were whether to charge, and whether to limit possible legal problems by disclaiming responsibility for information accuracy in inherited records. In 1994 the RMM agreed, after legal advice, upon a uniform disclaimer. In practice, its use with active records was often overlooked.⁷⁵

A majority of records and departmental staff favoured charging to deter 'fishing trip' enquiries, and reflect the work involved. Some enquirers approached CNT to avoid local authority charges. The Code of Practice on CNT Information in 1993 stated that:

“CNT will make no charge for processing simple requests for information. Where a request is complex and would require extensive searches of records or processing or collation of information, an additional charge, reflecting reasonable costs, may be notified to the applicant and is payable before further work is undertaken.”⁷⁶

In 1995 a standard search fee plus copying charge was discussed, but fees remained a local decision. Records officers agreed to standardise charges and procedures themselves and encourage staff to follow these for production of records for outside bodies.⁷⁷

6.6 PROMOTING AND MARKETING RECORDS MANAGEMENT

From the 1980s, archivists increasingly promoted holdings to attract further deposits, visitors, and resources. Museum-style interpretation and presentation of records became routine, with exhibitions, publications, open-days, media interviews, stalls at history fairs, talks and visits, and liaison with schools. Friends and trust groups were fostered.⁷⁸ Records managers, because they

⁷⁴ *Guardian* cutting, January 1998, in CNT Records: 30/1/15.

⁷⁵ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

⁷⁶ “CNT Code of Practice On CNT Information”, p2, in CNT Records: 30/1/15.

⁷⁷ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

⁷⁸ Nigel Yates, “Marketing the record office: new directions in archival public relations”, *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, vol 9, no 2, April 1988, pp69-75; Gareth Haulfryn Williams, “Local Archives and the Media: I: The Press”, *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, 10, no 2, April 1989, pp57-65; Gareth Haulfryn Williams, “Local Archives and the Media: II: Television and Radio”, *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, 10, no 4, October 1989, pp155-161; Rosemary C Dunhill, “Friends and trusts”, *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, 10, no 2, April 1989, pp75-80.

related to a business process and function, had less public interaction and concentrated on custodial matters. It was asserted that records managers were less good than librarians and information officers at promotion, but, as this case study shows, individual records managers did actively promote their function and profession.⁷⁹

The PRO expected promotion and marketing by a departmental record officer:

“A major duty of DROs is to ensure that their functions are as widely known within their departments as possible....How best to achieve this aim will vary between departments.”⁸⁰

This presupposed existence of a DRO, an unsafe assumption for NDPBs and executive agencies with non-civil service regimes. CNT had to ask the PRO what was expected in 1984, before it appointed a DRO, and had no records management unit until 1989, and no organisation-wide formal function until 1992. Similarly, the PRO demonstrated no proactive interest in establishing records management in the new RDAs in 1999, even though they were declared public record bodies. EP's DRO raised this with the PRO because of the RDA involvement with EP plus his management had questioned why EP took records management seriously if RDAs suffered no penalty.⁸¹ Records management promotion was vital to retain management approval for the very existence of the function, and to secure resources.

Without a formal records management function, CNT had no incentive or agent to raise awareness of records management benefits, or legislative requirements. Records management prior to the 1990s was intermittent, and comprised external initiatives such as Peter Walne's in 1965 and the 1982 ACA/NTA working party, or events such as corporation closures. In between, corporate interest sank.

Corporation and CNT registries up to 1992 only promoted themselves indirectly through good service provision or procedural instructions. MKDC archivists did little more. However, when MKDC's records centre opened in 1985 the staff magazine introduced the Archivist, Mike Evans.⁸² Evans felt helping departments to move records out of office space was itself good public relations.⁸³ An exhibition of photographs directly sought information from departmental staff about subjects and dates, not promotion of the records centre or records management. The seconded Buckinghamshire archivists selected archives from MKDC records and had no remit for life-cycle records management. There was no argument to win – simply a job to do.

⁷⁹ Carl Newton, “A view from the records management bridge or hard times in Eastbourne”, *Records Management Journal*, April 2001, 11, no 1, pp3-6.

⁸⁰ Public Record Office, “Manual”, 1993, section 2.1.3, np.

⁸¹ Author's Knowledge.

⁸² Milton Keynes Development Corporation, *The Insider*, staff journal, no 412, 15 August 1985, np, in CNT Records file: 30/2/2/1, “Records – Office Administration – Records Centre – General”, 1992-1998, EP Records Centre.

At CNT, where issues were greater than in any single corporation, permanent records management staff were needed to raise awareness. From 1988-92 Les Field and Hilary Moon submitted papers to the Board “for the purpose of drawing members attention to the considerable task which is inherited by the Commission upon the dissolution of each Development Corporation and to outline the steps which are being taken to deal with both inherited records and the Commission’s own records”. The PRO had identified Public Records Acts breaches in 1987. CNT had since “been making strenuous efforts to rectify the position”.⁸⁴ This highlighted records management, but appropriate resources were not directly requested.

Promotion and marketing came only with a professional and dedicated function. Lack of recognition and definition of records management before 1992 was usual. The onus for change fell on individual practitioners.⁸⁵ Biggs discovered, and combatted, perceptions at CNT that records management was merely ‘filing’. Early action improved the working environment within Records locations to raise staff morale. He sought to enhance the function’s status, embed services, attract support and resources, and gain access to information and mutually supportive groups within the organisation. Biggs’s views, crucially, aligned with those of line management. In 1992, the Head of Corporate Services (HCS) linked the future of records management, in the face of impending “drastic reductions on administrative costs” imposed by the DoE, with marketing and performance targeting:

“The three-year plan and the review are to provide the basis on which Records Management will endeavour to show ‘value for money’ and to generally sell its services to the Commission and to users.”

and

“HCS stressed again the need for Records Management to ‘sell its facilities’ as do other Corporate services.”⁸⁶

Despite policy and communication, Records staff encountered some opposition or disinterest. When Central Office held a “Clean Up Your Act Day” in 1995, there was no liaison with Records to ensure that “chuck the chaff” did not involve archival records. Worse, a 1998 e-mail enjoined staff to get rid of “unwanted papers” and “obsolete” records, with the instruction: “Old ratty files – dump as rubbish”. Biggs asked “please ensure R.L.O.’s do not allow “old” records to be dumped without any thought.”⁸⁷ However, overall, the promotional approach was successful. The function survived, grew and centralised around the Stacey Bushes Records Centre through the 1990s.

⁸³ Evans, *The Society of Archivists Thames Region Newsletter*, October 1986.

⁸⁴ CNT Records: 30/3/1/3.

⁸⁵ Jane Loadman, “Does the position of records management within the organisation influence the records management provision?”, *Records Management Journal*, 11, no 1, April 2001, pp45-63.

⁸⁶ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

⁸⁷ CNT Records file: 30/3/2/25, “Records – Departmental – Central (Milton Keynes) – Administration”, 1992-1998, EP Records Centre.

Methods

There were both deliberate stratagems exercised by Records staff, and side-benefits from other actions. Reports and presentations directly communicated messages about activity, workload, benefits and achievements, and service standards maintained accurate and efficient levels of operational service that pleased the business.

MKDC Records Centre produced annual reports and statistics.⁸⁸ Biggs continued this approach at CNT as evidence and measures of activity, and received general management approval. In 1993 the Head of Corporate Services said “salesmanship...is something we should encourage”.⁸⁹ In 1997 the Director of Finance suggested that reports go to Ian Nicol at the DoE. Yet management was unconcerned if reports were not produced, and no other function did.⁹⁰ Presentations were developed and adapted to target audiences.⁹¹

Departmental staff were encouraged to tour the records centre to learn about activities and why certain procedures were required. Director Central organised a group visit of principal officers following the 1994 restructuring. It was the first visit for most, and revealed lack of awareness. For example, as all the staff but the DRO at that time were female, they enquired if there was a man to get boxes off the shelves. The DRO secured visits by successive chief executives.⁹²

Fresh initiatives and advancing technology were regularly considered. For example, a newsletter, *The Recorder*, was launched after the merger with URA and made available via the intranet. As well as generating its own communication channels, Records utilised existing media such as staff magazines for profile-raising articles. In 1996 a photograph and article on a visit to the PRO linked to a drier message about the forthcoming re-organisation of the Milton Keynes and Glen House sections.⁹³

Biggs introduced internal service standards for his staff, linked to performance management, designed to maintain a level of professional service with a customer-satisfaction focus to build staff confidence. Furthermore, it was beneficial to be visibly helpful during re-organisations to keep records as orderly as possible, and because departmental staff might remember and reciprocate assistance. In 1997 the DRO's deputy visited departments daily during Central Office's relocation with the message that “Hopefully staff will find this extra assistance helpful in

⁸⁸ CNT Records file: 30/2/2/1, “Records – Office Administration – Records Centre – General”, 1992-1998, EP Records Centre.

⁸⁹ CNT Records: 30/1/1/3.

⁹⁰ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

⁹¹ CNT Records file: 30/1/1/5, “Records – General and Policy – Records Management – Records Liaison Officers”, 1992-1998, EP Records Centre.

⁹² CNT Records: 30/1/1/2; Author's Knowledge.

⁹³ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2; 30/3/1/4.

the busy period ahead.”⁹⁴ In 1998 Records staff were noticeable at Glen House, physically assisting staff with transfer of records during the office closure.⁹⁵

Indirectly, good public relations came through standard records management practice such as promulgation of a new Records Policy Document (RPD) in 1994, which fitted CNT’s business ethos of policies and reports. The DRO was congratulated by Director, Marketing for the “way in which you have brought the necessary attention to records management”.⁹⁶ The Audit Manager recognised that the RPD had “an impact both on our reviews of systems throughout the Commission and our personal management of projects/assignments”. He gave welcome managerial support, exemplifying the importance of champions to implementing records management.⁹⁷ Through the 1990s a range of other literature disseminating information and guidance to staff on records procedures also fostered awareness and understanding, thus enlisting allies, such as the “User Friendly Guide” illustrated overview first produced in 1994 and regularly updated.⁹⁸

Records management added value by involvement in committees and work groups, which gave wider fora for ideas, skills and messages. Invitations to participate might arise from recognition gained during another activity or initiative. However, it was difficult to break into management committees because of lack of seniority for Records staff in the structure, and access to groups could be blocked by office politics.

With lack of organisational stability and status for records management, line-management champions were important. However, close alignment with one regime risked loss of a champion. In 1988-92, Les Field as Deputy Director, Finance, Administration and Legal Services, proved a senior and interested proponent for records activity who worked well with the DRO. When he retired, Hilary Moon lost that influence. The function then suffered from late 1992 with her departure, as there was nobody with experience or knowledge to influence executive decision-making for the 1994 re-organisation. The importance of top-down support was recognised for the Records restructuring in 1996. The Chief Executive advised all London staff that he would be “pleased if the Records Management team and your Records Liaison Officers are given your co-operation and support in implementing the changes that will take place.”⁹⁹

From 1992 Records staff valued, and tried to create, champions at all levels, primarily through commitment to quality service delivery. The RLOs, created as an operational necessity in 1994, were nominees rather than volunteers, and typically were secretaries and administrative

⁹⁴ CNT Records: 30/2/1/1.

⁹⁵ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

⁹⁶ CNT Records: 30/3/1/4.

⁹⁷ CNT Records: 30/3/1/5.

⁹⁸ CNT Records 30/1/1/4.

assistants. Some did not take well to the task. Nevertheless, they were key and therefore nurtured. Quarterly meetings were held from 1998, providing a solid basis when later information access and electronic records management culture necessitated interaction between Records and departmental staff. Also, regular questionnaire surveys of RLOs were implemented to monitor satisfaction with services and identify any issues requiring action.

6.7 STAFFING

Structure within the Organisation

The formal function launched in 1992 extended the approach taken since 1988. It was corporate, but not truly centralised, professional, or trained. The Records Management Meetings (RMM) germinated cohesion and consistency amongst the Records sections, but development of this corporate structure ended with the departure of an experienced DRO and introduction of regional business delivery.

By May 1993 a review of staffing requirements for records management within the “Three Year Plan” was completed, but had to continue existing structures and gradings, so for example assistants on higher gradings were redesignated as Senior Records Assistants regardless of ability. The senior line manager for the function was designated Principal Records Manager, to be corporate DRO with local Milton Keynes responsibilities. A Records Officer would serve as local deputy, supported by seven records assistants. Telford would have a Records Manager and four assistants, North a Records Manager and six assistants, Glen House a Records Manager, and three assistants. Recruitment was only partly completed, when in August 1993 EMG imposed a freeze on external appointments.¹⁰⁰

The decentralised, regionalised, records management of 1994-98 was inconsistent. Consistency was achieved between Milton Keynes and Glen House in 1996 through merging their sections. The corporate function of 1998 brought further centralisation, and records activity centralised completely under the DRO following the URA merger.

Staff Numbers

In 1988-92 the mostly ad hoc staffing allocated to CNT records management failed to match tasks, resulting in increased workload. The department created in 1992 had seventeen posts providing organisation-wide services to some 800 staff, and held over one million closed, mostly unstructured, records from twenty three organisations. At the new Milton Keynes Office, the Records Officer was initially expected to run two sites – an expanded registry (including deeds

⁹⁹ CNT Records: 30/3/1/4.

¹⁰⁰ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2; 30/1/1/3.

strongroom) and off-site records centre – with only three assistants. There were no staff available for records review.¹⁰¹

Part of the problem with allocating numbers for records management was assessing workload. Records staff in 1992 agreed that they needed more resources for implementing systems and dealing with backlogs. They believed automation would assist control, and might allow future staffing reductions. However, the twenty five posts agreed for the “Three Year Plan” in 1992-93 were abandoned before implementation for the sake of wider reorganisation, and voluntary redundancies at Glen House and Telford meant only eleven staff were in post by 1996. The workload extant in 1992 was never therefore resourced, and further increased through to 1998 and beyond.¹⁰²

Management’s low prioritisation meant that the organisation never got on top of records work. It never cleared its backlog of closed records to address first review. If the organisation had sufficiently resourced implementation of records management in 1992, it could have looked at redeployment or redundancy for surplus staff at the 1998 reorganisation. CNT would then probably have proceeded with a settled records management system focused upon current new town records or those awaiting first review, and inherited UDC and HAT records. However, minimalist staffing was prone to pressure points, and was affected by departures, absences, recruitment freezes, and unplanned work caused by office moves and closures. Six staff had lengthy sickness absences in the crucial period 1995-98. Staff commitment to cover each other and vacancies was vital, plus use of temporary staff. Resultant issues are examined below.

CNT posts in 1998 – initially limited – could not include many Records staff, but “unlike in other areas of the organisation, Records workload increases not diminishes in periods of close down and transfer”.¹⁰³ Post-1998 records management staffing was centralised, not increased, to absorb additional workload from eight UDCs and one HAT. From 1999, further workload and records were received from URA, from business created by the new EP remit, from inheritance of further HATs, and from new electronic records management and information access issues – without extra staff, and with recruitment frozen from 1999.

Use of Redundant Staff

The case study illustrates issues around using redundant staff. In principle, it seems sensible that staff under notice should be applied elsewhere if superfluous in their own area, but not, however, as the primary source for records management staffing. The 1993 restructuring report defined records work as “residuary” to which redundant staff could be applied. Consultants, lacking understanding or experience of records management, claimed “it would be possible in theory to

¹⁰¹ CNT Records file: 30/2/3/7, “Records – Office Administration – Staff – Establishment”, 1992-1998, EP Records Centre.

¹⁰² CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

¹⁰³ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

clear the backlog by June by deploying 96 redundant staff”.¹⁰⁴ The report, without DRO consultation, was used to cut permanent Records staff. However, redundant staff were not deployed as suggested, with many permitted ‘gardening leave’.

In any case, the RMM considered use of redundant staff from other departments for records work needed careful consideration as to where it “would be helpful, appropriate and manageable”, and later affirmed that it was “not to be recommended.” The Records Officer (South) was unhappy that redundant secretaries were unfamiliar “with the whole concept of data inputting”, and “never build up sufficient speed” meaning “the huge task of inputting the backlog is not going to be significantly advanced”. He wanted suitable agency temporaries. Even redundant Records staff could be problematical. Glen House Records staff who chose redundancy rather than relocation in 1996, did not complete outstanding work or close-down tasks, and the Records Officer stopped attending the RMM. The drive to cut staff through to 1998 meant that a Telford assistant post was dis-established, although this had “to be balanced against possible difficulties if the member of staff had been kept involuntarily.”¹⁰⁵

Recruitment

Recruitment for records management posts posed dilemmas. It remains normal for UK central government practitioners to gain expertise in post. However, training staff after appointment takes time. This is not ideal for review or archival selection of substantial collections of complex records. The formal CNT function found it difficult to get professional staffing needs recognised internally. In 1993, internal recruitment for CNT records posts attracted interest from secretaries and administrative assistants motivated by salary. Personnel staff exerted pressure to give preference to internal applicants, especially those facing redundancy. Suitability for job was not their main consideration, and ‘problem’ staff were manoeuvred towards Records. The pool of internal candidates was unsuitable for the level of information management desired by a professionalising function.¹⁰⁶

The first external recruitment exercise for CNT Records staff was to resource the “Three Year Plan”.¹⁰⁷ Through the 1990s, the DRO found that, despite market-competitive salaries, responses to external adverts were disappointing, reflecting a general lack of available practitioners. Furthermore, professional appointees often sought career progression after short periods. Sometimes internal promotions of para-professionals required consideration to fill posts.

Use of Temporaries and Consultants in Records Management

Employment of temporary staff – agency, direct contract, students on vacation, or consultants – can benefit specific projects. In the case study, ex-Records staff undertook reviewing, and, from

¹⁰⁴ CNT Records: 30/3/3/2.

¹⁰⁵ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

¹⁰⁶ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2; Author’s Knowledge.

¹⁰⁷ CNT Records: 30/3/3/2.

1992 to 1994, Telford Office shared a student with Shropshire Record Office.¹⁰⁸ In 1993 the RMM debated using students for data-inputting to “make a dent in the volume”, or – for accuracy – agency temporaries.¹⁰⁹ Using temporaries allowed permanent staff to concentrate on specialist work. Consultants can bring new perspectives. Management, perversely, may listen to outsiders giving a message that they ignore from colleagues.

However, the case study demonstrates inappropriate use of temporaries, especially as long-term cover for frozen Records posts. Perception of records management as low-grade work persisted. Departmental staff often used inexperienced temporaries to clear filing backlogs and prepare records transfers. Records staff had regularly to re-list such records. Use of temporaries theoretically saved costs by reducing establishment numbers, but indirect costs of agency fees, and consultancy expenses, could exceed costs for an equivalent permanent employee. There were further, hidden, costs where work was not done as speedily, efficiently or correctly as by an appropriately-recruited and trained permanent employee, plus costs in supervision and training where turnover in temporaries was high. The case study suggests it was false economy, and not value for money. CNT used local recruitment agencies chosen by the Personnel function, so Records input was limited to accepting or rejecting individuals. Specialist library and information recruitment agencies were not used for basic processing work, and were prohibitively expensive for specialist tasks. Local agencies did not provide candidates specifically seeking records work, and found difficulty in matching specified attributes and skills. Good temporaries often left for higher-paid assignments or permanent work.

In 1996-98 permanent contracts were embargoed due to envisaged closure in 1998, and CNT employed new staff for fixed terms through an agency. Three staff were employed in Records on this basis. Fixed-term contracts had less generous provisions than permanent. Even when the 1998 organisation was confirmed, it remained possible that it would mainly rely on out-sourcing.¹¹⁰ This led one Records contractor to leave for a permanent job. The DRO argued that whilst it was possible to recruit quality agency staff, CNT “would be in a predicament if it was unable to retain any existing staff with knowledge of its records holdings and practices.” By the end of 1997, following a report on staffing arrangements, the DETR agreed that most posts, including Records, should be in-house.¹¹¹

Les Field and Hilary Moon utilised ex-staff as consultants from 1988. The former Redditch Librarian and ACA/NTA Working Group member, Ken Small, was retained until 1995 to work part-time at Redditch and then Telford offices sorting Redditch records.¹¹² Former Corby Development Corporation and CNT Administrative Officer, Peter Lane, had a roving portfolio

¹⁰⁸ CNT Records file: 30/2/3/3, “Records – Office Administration – Staff – Temporary”, 1992-1998, EP Records Centre.

¹⁰⁹ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

¹¹⁰ See Chapter 8.2 for discussion of out-sourcing.

¹¹¹ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

until 1994.¹¹³ Field asked Lane to explore the possibility of a county archivist serving as a consultant to CNT in “the sorting and identification of the records” and who could make specific comment on Lane’s recommendations. This did not materialise, and Lane was entrenched in the records management programme of 1988-91. In 1990 he represented the DRO at a seminar, and was styled “Consultant Records Advisor to the Commission”.¹¹⁴ Consultants ‘parachuting’ into offices did not always suit existing staff. This did not promote records management. Thus Lane’s visits to Basildon ended in 1993. As a Basildon Office existed for eleven years, a permanent Records presence might have provided consistency, and integrated with and supported the office and wider organisation in tasks beyond review and disposal. Archivists also seemed negative towards some CNT consultants.¹¹⁵

The approach diminished as a formal professional function developed, and because open-ended, long-term consultancies were costly and lacked control and accountability. At Telford, Small was retained for so long that the Records Officer argued in 1993 that he was “an essential part of the team”.¹¹⁶ When Small’s employment ended in 1995, Telford staff had to visit Worcestershire Record Office to familiarise themselves because Small had normally dealt with it. This highlights CNT’s failure to retain useful corporation staff upon transfer, and avoid their re-employment on a consultancy basis.

Other risks were associated with using ex-staff consultants. Lane *donated* certain records and gave lists of CNT holdings to county archivists without reference to CNT, acknowledging: “it may be prudent not to let CNT [know] that you have the lists or where they came from!”¹¹⁷ Northamptonshire received “an outright gift” of Lane’s new town papers, which were in effect public records or copies of public records. Yet he stated: “I do not want CNT to have access or title to this material...Indeed I would prefer CNT to remain unaware of its existence... nobody be permitted access...for the next ten years as the information could be used to embarrass CNT by having to reveal confidential information and files.” The county archivist accepted the items and conditions.¹¹⁸

Professionalism and Training

Use of qualified staff

When the first corporations were established few contemporary archivists had professional qualifications. University archive courses developed as local authority record offices opened, providing career opportunities. Furthermore, the UK archives profession had limited records management experience until the 1980s. The discipline grew, but was applied variously – by

¹¹² CNT Records: 30/3/5/3.

¹¹³ CNT Records: 30/1/1/1.

¹¹⁴ CNT Records: 30/4/21; 30/1/21/13.

¹¹⁵ Interviews with various archivists - Author’s Notes.

¹¹⁶ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

¹¹⁷ Hertfordshire RO: E8/4.

¹¹⁸ Northamptonshire RO: Box File.

civil servants in central government and qualified archivists in local government, to patient records in the National Health Service, and to particular needs in private sector oil and pharmaceutical industries. Practitioners entered from various educational backgrounds and employment routes.¹¹⁹ Records management as a qualification-based profession independent of archives administration, was recognised in the UK by the launch in 1993 of postgraduate degrees in information and records management at the University of Northumbria in Newcastle.¹²⁰

In the late 1970s Stevenage and Harlow corporations considered employing professional archivists, but in common with most corporations faced with close-down, opted for the apparently cheaper option of liaising with county archivists.¹²¹ Only Telford and Milton Keynes employed qualified archivists. However, it proved difficult to retain staff at Telford, highlighting that use of high-calibre or professional staff does risk turnover due to career progression – particularly disruptive if only a single professional post exists.¹²² If professional posts are optional, and an organisation pursues other priorities, posts are vulnerable to removal or vacancy when employees leave, in favour of cheaper employees, who may perform a satisfactory, rather than best practice, role. Telford did not replace its Archivist for its last two years. MKDC paid a third party, Buckinghamshire County Council, to run its records centre from 1985 to 1992. As several archivists remained until closure, and one moved to CNT, the records management system survived transfer.

Where professional staff existed, their impact was constrained by their position within structures, and records management situations were influenced by non-professional staff at management level. MKDC archivists were back-room practitioners, removed from policy and decision-making for closure arrangements. After transfer, CNT's qualified Records Officer at Milton Keynes was instructed in records management policy and strategy by an unqualified head of function. It was difficult for junior staff to feed professional knowledge, experience and advice into management processes, or to influence policy and decisions affecting operations.

CNT discussed employing 'archivists' from the 1960s. The 1968 CNT records report discussed a dedicated post, that did not materialise and CNT used existing administrative staff until 1992. Howard Ruffman, as DRO in 1987, considered Society of Archivists membership.¹²³ Although

¹¹⁹ Graham Southwood, ed, *Records Management Information 3, A Career in Records Management*, revised July 1991, Records Management Society, 1991.

¹²⁰ Catherine Hare, "A new course in records management at the University of Northumbria", *Records Management Bulletin*, no 55, April 1993, p27.

¹²¹ Although Stevenage commissioned an archivist to provide a report in 1976-77 - see Chapter 8.5.

¹²² Sula Rayska (1975-83) retrained as a surveyor (Interview: Rayska). Sue Bramley (1983-87) was an early member of the Records Management Society, serving as Secretary 1985-86, and as a Director 1986-87 (biographical details from: Records Management Society, *Records Management Bulletin*, nos 8-20, January 1985-June 1987). Dr Margaret O'Sullivan (1987-89) left to become County Archivist of Derbyshire (Author's Knowledge).

¹²³ CNT Records file: 30/1/4, "Records – General and Policy – Society of Archivists", 1992-1998, EP Records Centre.

rare at that time, the PRO expressed displeasure in 1988 that CNT had not appointed a professional archivist as DRO. CNT had professionally-qualified staff in other disciplines, but its records management went without for thirty years, despite contact with Walne in the 1960s and the ACA in 1982, despite public record status in 1984 and discussion with the PRO in 1987-88.

Field and Moon took records matters seriously between 1988 and 1992. CNT joined the Records Management Society.¹²⁴ However, a professional records management function was not actively promoted and generally they took a task and finish approach and operated in legal and administrative terms. Their approach reflected their working environment and that they were not records professionals or engaged full-time on records matters. Moon appointed a qualified archivist as Records Officer at Milton Keynes in 1992, only because the opportunity presented itself.

Formal records management under a qualified archivist as DRO changed CNT's approach from 1993, leading to a central department of professional and para-professional staff delivering records and information management services by 1999. Policy, practice and standards were introduced or enhanced. For example, in 1994 the DRO recommended records officers build up manuals of procedures for staff and users to "prove an invaluable record for the future should the knowledge and experience of individual Records staff be lost."¹²⁵ The function required professionalisation through the 1990s to manage an increasing and broadening workload. The full-time DRO could better focus on records matters than his part-time predecessors. As a qualified records manager he comprehended and promoted professional issues, context and relationships. He supported and utilised professional associations for information, training and recruitment, and actively participated in the Association of Departmental Record Officers (ADRO).¹²⁶ He saw professional qualifications and para-professional training as a benchmark for quality assurance, whilst recognising that they did not guarantee good performance, and that personal and other factors were also important.

Training

The PRO Manual enjoined DROs to "identify the training needs of their staff and ensure that they are met."¹²⁷ Public record status provided opportunities. In 1985 staff attended a PRO seminar for departmental record staff. When the Cabinet Office promoted the Civil Service College records management training course in 1987, CNT agreed to be represented.¹²⁸ In 1989 Hilary Moon spoke on "New Towns Phoenix rises from Development Corporation Ashes" at a RMS

¹²⁴ CNT Records: 30/1/5/1.

¹²⁵ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

¹²⁶ CNT Records file: 30/1/3/5, "Records – General and Policy – Public Record Office – Association of DROs", 1992-1998, EP Records Centre.

¹²⁷ Public Record Office, "Manual", 1993, section 2.1.11, np.

¹²⁸ In 1987 and 1988 the Civil Service College ran a series of records management courses of two and a half days duration. Britannia Data Management, *Records Management News for*

seminar on managing public sector records.¹²⁹ How CNT was tackling the “problem of its records so as to fulfil its obligations under the Public Records Acts” was a PRO conference topic in 1990. The post-1992 function was committed to training in records and non-records skills. Records staff routinely attended PRO and RMS annual conferences. A “first steps records management” in-house course ran for Records staff and the new departmental record liaison officers in 1994, followed by PRO presentations and training on records appraisal and preparation for transfer in 1996.¹³⁰ By close of the case study period many short-courses, workshops, master classes, seminars, meetings with topical presentations, and conferences were available from the PRO, professional associations and commercial training bodies.

Training non-professional staff via the City and Guilds Certification Scheme for records assistants and national vocational qualifications (NVQs) attracted controversy in the 1980s amongst archivists worried about devaluing the profession.¹³¹ However, CNT welcomed workplace learning and in 1995-98 trained internal verifiers, assessors and candidates for NVQs in Business Administration.¹³² The DRO mentored staff for the Society of Archivists Registration Scheme training in 1998-99, and the RM3 partnership course, provided by the PRO and Universities of Liverpool and Northumbria, for central government staff. CNT sponsored Records staff in GCSEs, A levels and degrees.¹³³ The national award of Investor in People was obtained by CNT’s Milton Keynes Office in 1997, and the DRO was a project team member.

Wider skills-sets

Professional training needed to be part of a wider skills-set, as the DRO’s job profile increased. A CNT records manager needed general business and administrative skills, with training in financial processes, health and safety, risk assessment, disaster planning, and project management. Staff management required techniques and skills for leadership, motivation and prioritisation. Managers were expected to have personal workloads and to perform effectively individually, but also to get the most out of teams of diverse people. A records manager had to meet heightened expectations of quality service levels and response times from colleagues and the public. The information access framework from 1998 demanded familiarity with relevant

Government, vol 1, issue 1, 1987, p3; Britannia Data Management, *BDM News*, 1-2, 1988-89; CNT Records: 30/1/1/1.

¹²⁹ CNT Records: 30/1/5/1.

¹³⁰ CNT Records file: 30/2/3/5, “Records – Office Administration – Staff – Training: General”, 1992-1998, EP Records Centre; CNT Records: 30/1/1/2; 30/2/2/1.

¹³¹ Vivienne Aldous, “Correspondence - Training of archives assistants”, *The Society of Archivists, The Newsletter*, no 45, May 1988, pp6-8; Sue Garland, and Margaret Whittick, “Training Of Non-Professional Records Management Staff”, *RMG Topics*, pp1-3, in *RMG News*, in *The Society of Archivists, The Newsletter*, no 40, March 1987; Shelley Hardcastle, “City and Guilds – A Milestone in Records Management”, *Records Management Bulletin*, no 35, December 1989, pp6-7, 11; Jeanette Horrocks, “The Day Of The Archives Assistants”, *The Society of Archivists, The Newsletter*, no 44, February 1988, pp4-5.

¹³² With the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry Commercial Education Trust Examinations Board (LCCIEB). Author’s Knowledge; CNT Records: 30/1/1/3.

¹³³ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

legislation and codes of practice. Even if not the designated Data Protection and Freedom of Information Officer, the records manager was key to compliance.

Status and salaries

Registry staff, archivists and records managers were typically positioned in organisational structures in the case study to reflect their links to administrative or legal functions, as local government archivists had traditionally been placed with a county secretary and/or solicitor. The MKDC archivists reported to an office manager. At CNT, before regionalisation, records management staff came within the Finance Administration and Legal Services Directorate (1989-92), and Corporate Services (1992-94). However, the case study exemplifies that positioning records management as an addendum to financial directorates did not maximise potential benefits to the organisation, as records management did not appear as a distinct or core activity, or as a clearly-defined information management function.

Salaries reflect the value ascribed to a function. Through the 1990s a discrepancy remained between the qualifications, experience and expert contribution of Records staff and their remuneration. Salaries were lower than other information-based disciplines, such as IT. Although registry files and records centre services were used daily, this demand did not translate into grading, perhaps, as David Ludford stated in 1992, because records management was not “sexy”.¹³⁴ This situation was hindered by a generally low market-rate for local government practitioners, and was unlikely to change unless professional records management was uniformly recognised as crucial to the success or failure of business.¹³⁵ Salary affected the calibre of para-professional and administrative staff. Ring-fencing vacancies often meant allocating posts to staff without vocational interest or appropriate skills, as it was difficult to justify external recruitment. Such staff then often sought higher-salaried posts elsewhere. Low grading limited achievements, as shown by the inability of Records to prevent staff cuts in 1993-94. Before this, at the first RMM in 1992, the Milton Keynes Records Officer sought a clear-cut mandate from management as to his role, as he was unsure of his authority when he met resistance.¹³⁶

Job titles affected perceptions. The “Three Year Plan” dropped the term “Registry Clerk” in favour of “Records Assistants”. In 1994, posts were cut from the pool of “records assistants”, without cognizance of the impact. Some specialisation was necessary, so posts that emerged after 1998 were task-based, such as Registry Officer and Deeds Management Officer. Renaming Records Officers as Records Managers in 1993 was reversed in the 1994 restructuring when regional directors placed them below other managers and renamed them officers.¹³⁷ The department’s name was also significant. Although generally referred to as “Records”, it was

¹³⁴ Author’s Knowledge.

¹³⁵ Author’s Knowledge as a manager and employee, and from CNT/EP grading and structure charts.

¹³⁶ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

¹³⁷ CNT Records: 30/3/3/2.

officially termed either “Records Management” or “Records Services”. The latter seemed to better reflect the life-cycle and wide-ranging activity provided at CNT by 1998, when traditionally ‘records management’ was often associated with closed records alone. However, later it was felt that “Services” might convey negative connotations within EP as a support function, whilst “Management” carried business-orientated perceptions.

Inappropriate reporting lines often resulted from office politics, empire-building, or expediency. Inappropriate position and grading are particularly illustrated in the Departmental Record Officer role. In theory, the DRO provided focus for records work. In practice, the DRO’s influence and activity depended on the post-holder’s vocation and organisational position. In the case study, where senior staff took the role without particular interest in, or knowledge of, records management, as in 1984-88, the DRO did not substantially advance records management. Where the DRO was more focused, combined with greater PRO interest, as in 1988-92, more progress occurred, but remained limited by other responsibilities. From 1993 records management and the DRO position combined in a full-time qualified records manager. The even more favourable situation of a qualified, dedicated DRO, heading a centralised corporate function did not come until 1998. The optimum position of such a DRO holding director-level seniority for records and information provision was never reached.

Specific problems arose for the DRO in 1993-98 from lack of status, decentralised sections, and different reporting lines. Explaining the role in the RPD from 1994 had no discernible impact. Without a high status, many non-Records staff did not understand the DRO role and neither consulted nor informed. The regionalised structure forced the DRO to persuade, influence and investigate autonomous Records colleagues, rather than line-manage. The main channel for the DRO was the RMM. In 1994 the DRO “reminded the record officers that he must be involved in any matters concerning the Public and County Record offices, and that when it came to implementation of the Records Policy Document and judging what was of archival value, he was available and willing to assist.” In 1995 he advised officers that the PRO Liaison Officer should be informed of deposits to local record offices via the DRO.¹³⁸ However, such procedures might be ignored. The Records Manager (North)’s departure report to his regional director in 1994 made no reference to the DRO, PRO or the need to submit 3(6) applications for records transfers.¹³⁹ The DRO discovered in 1995 with regard to dealings with TWAS in 1992-94 that “much could have been done earlier and differently....information and correspondence with TWAS had not been passed on at the time by the former Records Manager (North) and also that permission for privileged access to records had been given without any reference to the DRO.”¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

¹³⁹ CNT Records: 30/3/3/2.

¹⁴⁰ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

6.8 SUMMARY

CNT's overall structure and direction affected the scope of records management. A comprehensive three year project was formally agreed in 1993 and informally abandoned the same year due to restructuring. Intellectual registry and departmental "Records Liaison Officers" replaced physical registries in 1994. When operations were regionalised and centralised, Records staff followed.

Although organisational change presented difficulties, the overall ethos of the records management function from 1992 was of a comprehensive, life-cycle service, applying common policy and practice. For effective records management to filter through an organisation, all stages of records activity had to be linked. Records management activity, remit and influence was extended, and after 1998 it appeared an accepted centralised, corporate function even when trends again favoured regional business delivery. However, this was achieved 'by stealth' through individual endeavour, and without guarantee it would be maintained. The CNT/URA merger in 1999 underlines the risk to records management programmes from organisational change. The case study shows organisational failure to establish records management quickly and directly because it was not understood to be a business function. Records management relied on individual champions for success, rather than a secure organisational position based on legislative recognition and mandatory requirements.

A written policy document made the records management function and programme tangible, and embedded it in the organisation's policy infrastructure. It was an important statement that the organisation took records management – in theory – seriously. It served as a point of reference for staff, and a source of authority for Records staff.

The case study shows that formal records management from 1992 continued registry practice and culture, and reinvigorated it to assist overall records management, initially through traditional physical filing. When organisational change prevented this, registry principles proved adaptable to an intellectual approach. This satisfied staff who favoured decentralisation and independence, but gave records management the control needed to improve quality and accountability of current record-keeping. It proved possible to create and operate centralised corporate classification systems for widely-dispersed staff and functions.

Records management automation was only resolved at CNT after 1992, although it suffered an initial lack of co-ordination, consultation and direction, which meant that the product chosen was not necessarily the most appropriate. The difficulties experienced with data-entry resourcing and quality also show the impact of organisational change, inappropriate staffing and reporting lines, and low prioritisation.

Access requests little troubled development corporations as all closed by 1992. In contrast, CNT faced Open Government initiatives and freedom of information. Records increasingly managed information provision as knowledgeable departmental staff left, and central records storage increased. The information access regime underlined the importance of accurate record-keeping and finding-aids. Organised, professional records management contributed to accurate information provision, both by improving file identification through central registration and records centre indexing, and by offering a central point to co-ordinate organisational responses and to provide consistency and continuity, minimising the risks. A central enquiry service complemented a corporate, centralised records management approach.

Promotion and marketing helped to secure successful records management, as seen at Stacey Bushes from 1992. The professional function understood that records managers must demonstrate the organisational benefits of records management, respond to changing customer needs, exploit marketing techniques and information technology tools, and construct good working relationships at all levels, particularly with key decision-makers who might champion records management.

CNT's records management staffing was insufficient in 1988-92. CNT failed to invest initially in appropriate resources, hoping to redeploy as needs evolved. Use of low-grade, part-time and temporary staffing reflected lack of appreciation and understanding. Trained and qualified staff are automatically appointed to perform many organisational functions. The case study demonstrates that this should apply to records management. Records and information suffered where treated as administrative and clerical subjects requiring only basic staff skills and knowledge. Resourcing a permanent structured records management section, matching numbers to tasks, and providing high-grade posts with associated prestige, remuneration and job-satisfaction, is necessary for a managed and accountable workload. The qualified DRO at CNT from 1993 tried to provide the structure, motivation and training for a professional approach to work and processes by non-professional staff, raising administrative and clerical posts to that of para-professionals. However, the wider environment within which he operated remained unfavourable.

Case study data presented in this chapter demonstrates that records management works best with a defined scope, function, and policy, formalised procedures, and trained staff. This finding is further explored in Chapter 7 through case study examination of records management storage, review and disposition within a formal records management structure.

CHAPTER 7: RECORDS MANAGEMENT STORAGE, REVIEW AND DISPOSITION

Continuing the assessment of records management implementation and resourcing in the case study begun in Chapter 6, this chapter examines:

- Application of different storage solutions for closed records.
- Implementation of a review programme set against continual organisational change, decentralised structures, lack of appropriate reviewers, and disorganised records.
- Disposition of records through formal records management, examining issues of consistency in archival selection, conflict between national strategy and local interests, and difficulties arising from disposal as an alternative to destruction.

7.1 RECORDS MANAGEMENT STORAGE SOLUTIONS

Traditional in-house stores

After 1992 CNT continued, from necessity, to use basement/shed type storage for records. From 1992 it rented part of Portland House basement, adjacent to Glen House, to store records which it wanted accessible rather than in commercial storage (or even at Stacey Bushes after 1994). This initially short-term measure lasted until 1998, ending only because Glen House closed.

Structurally insecure, and below the Thames flood level, it suffered leaks and damp. The Glen House Records Officer knew it did not meet PRO guidance for records storage. In 1994 cigarette ends and builders' rubble were found, and safe doors had been left open.¹

The Telford and Warrington out-stores were named "records centres" after 1992 to emulate Milton Keynes, but lacked professional veneer. Telford's Stafford Park also stored furniture, and garaged the office car. Storage closely associated with the location or particular needs of an office was at risk from changes or closures. The Fernville Depository had not survived centralisation in 1982 because it depended on the Hemel Office, provided no national service, and had no formal records management programme. Unmanned, office-centred records stores after 1992 also closed as budget and disposal programmes required. North Office relinquished its Howley store in 1996, saving £20,000 annual rent, but leaving records vulnerable to main office moves. One thousand boxes moved to the vacant second floor of New Town House soon required urgent review, as the floor needed to be sub-let.²

¹ CNT Records file: 30/1/1/10, "Records – General and Policy – Records Management – Portland House Storage", 1992-1998, EP Records Centre; CNT Records: 30/1/1/2; 30/3/1/3.

² CNT Records: 30/1/1/2; 30/3/3/2.

The in-house centralised solution

Motivation:

The MKDC Records Centre specifically stored closed records together for archival selection. On inheritance in 1992, CNT opportunistically developed it as the platform for a full records management programme. The Stacey Bushes Records Centre was exemplary for CNT in many ways, even down to the box types used to maximise storage space.³

In May 1992 records from BDM required relocation “to CNT locations as soon as feasible”.⁴

There was uncertainty whether Stacey Bushes was the preferred replacement. Moon appeared to want, through records disposal, to downgrade it to an unmanned store whilst creating a large store within Milton Keynes’ Saxon Court office. This mirrored the Warrington situation, and echoed her approach at Redditch in 1989 when she advocated clearing the factory out-store for letting through destruction and deposit, moving remaining records into Redditch Office.⁵ A £100,000 budget was allocated for the Saxon Court work, but the local Executive Officer was opposed, no progress was made by 1993 and then re-organisation cut records management.⁶ In any case, the Stacey Bushes Records Centre had to continue as at MKDC for at least six months beyond transfer to CNT in order to process the “deluge” of records from MKDC’s closure.⁷

Stacey Bushes became accepted as CNT’s sole repository in response to demand. In 1992 it was a single factory unit with an ‘overspill’ store in a nearby, unmanned, unit. From 1994-97 it occupied three linked units of approximately 484 square metres each, and in 1997 acquired an additional adjoining double unit to become the centralised records centre for CNT, and then EP. This unplanned development did not allow the benefit of corporate resourcing. Staff were few, with a local reporting line and ‘Milton Keynes’ identity giving political difficulties when dealing with other regional staff. Resulting problems – notably insufficient space – should have been avoided by a high-level, strategic approach.

Space Issue

Centralisation required large-scale records movements. Piece-meal centralisation in 1992-98 resulted in space shortage and timing problems. Demand was met by crisis management. CNT Milton Keynes Records processed MKDC’s closure consignments by December 1992, “but it must be a priority of the Three Year Plan to allocate retention periods to records and begin a programme of controlled and agreed disposals”.⁸ By June 1993 space was “becoming a problem” at Stacey Bushes. In July, Executive Management Group approved an extension, hoping to provide a storage and retrieval service for Glen House by “re-rostered” existing

³ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

⁴ CNT Records: 30/1/2/3.

⁵ CNT Records: 30/1/1/1.

⁶ CNT Records: 30/2/1/1.

⁷ CNT Records: 30/2/3/7.

⁸ CNT Records: 30/1/1/3.

resources.⁹ In 1994 a fourteen week withdrawal programme from BDM commenced.¹⁰ Concurrent deliveries began from the closing Basildon Office, which otherwise would have gone into BDM.

Some benefits of the new arrangement were immediately lost when Biggs was required by the Milton Keynes Director to accommodate Milton Keynes Archaeological Unit records for Buckinghamshire County Council. This illustrated negative effects of regionalisation and local interests on a corporate initiative. It caused friction with Glen House Records because it prevented overflow from its allocated area.¹¹ Other unexpected problems arose. Glen House Records inaccurately assessed the volume and condition of BDM and Basildon records. By June 1994 simultaneous deliveries from these locations and Glen House overwhelmed the records centre. About one-third of BDM boxes were too large and heavy to lift onto upper shelves, and had not been reviewed and reboxed before arrival as planned, as the Glen House Records Officer said he could not obtain review authorisation from his new South Office regional management. Deliveries arrived unlisted, and without shelving, review or disposal assistance by Glen House Records.¹²

Although extra racking was installed, Stacey Bushes was unable to accommodate all envisaged transfers. New material was accepted only as space emerged through re-boxing and disposals, with consultants and emergencies prioritised.¹³ Acquisition of additional space in late 1996 ended the crisis, although consignment intake had to begin before shelving installation due to closure and office moves at Milton Keynes, Basildon and Portland House which:

“...put tremendous pressure on the Records Centre with thousands of boxes, tubes, boards, and cabinets and other furniture arriving. These had to be sorted, moved around and stacked on the floors ...Records staff became visibly strained.”¹⁴

A large backlog of unprocessed material developed, including 27,500 files. Much Glen House material arrived unlisted, unboxed, and without consignment numbers as departmental staff ignored transfer procedures.¹⁵

⁹ CNT Records file: 30/2/2/3/2, “Records – Office Administration – Records Centre – Re-Organisation – BDM Transfer”, 1992-1998, EP Records Centre.

¹⁰ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2; CNT Records file: 30/3/4/3, “Records – Departmental – South (Glen House) – Records Section”, 1992-1998, EP Records Centre.

¹¹ CNT Records file: 30/2/2/3/1, “Records – Office Administration – Records Centre – Re-organisation – 7,8,10 Erica Road”, 1992-1998, EP Records Centre; CNT Records file: 30/2/2/4, “Records – Office Administration – Records Centre – Milton Keynes Archaeological Records”, 1992-1998, EP Records Centre.

¹² CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

¹³ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2; 30/1/1/3; 30/2/2/3/1.

¹⁴ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

¹⁵ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

Disaster Planning and Business Continuity

As Stacey Bushes was an intermediate store it was considered unnecessary to fully apply BS 5454 standards.¹⁶ However, one strongroom had temperature and humidity controls, and halon (later argonite) fire-suppression. Health and safety standards, security, and maintenance were high, and increased under CNT. On-site staff vigilance was impossible in an unmanned store. From 1998 the records centre was considered appropriate to house the organisation's deeds. Deeds management – once an administrative by-product of the legal function – was enhanced by integration into a professional information service. The centralised records centre provided safer storage than office basement locations that experienced water ingress. Deeds storage was consolidated by 2000 under a Deeds Management Officer providing a service to all sites and consultants.

Emergency planning for records emanated from formal records management. Good practice for records protection was advocated in 1988 when Moon said that staff needed to appreciate the value of records and to keep them secure in cabinets provided.¹⁷ Records security became a feature of the registry/RLO relationship in the 1990s. Good records storage contributed to disaster prevention and business continuity.

Disaster recovery was a benefit provided firstly for the Milton Keynes Office, and from 1998 across CNT/EP, by the in-house off-site records centre. Stacey Bushes was recognised in 1994 as convenient to store recovery items, and re-establish critical business functions following disaster, but without involving the records manager.¹⁸ From 1996 IT stored computer back-up tapes there. Disregard for the primary purpose of the records centre emerged when the 'Disaster Recovery Plan' was centralised. In 1997 the DRO supported establishment of a 'Disaster Recovery Area' at Stacey Bushes, but a storage area was de-shelved for it. This seemed an impractical management decision given that records storage was an *actual* problem and disaster recovery space lay empty for a *potential* problem.¹⁹

Official disaster planning omitted preparation for records centre incidents – reflecting low priority for closed records – and omitted arrangements for records recovery in office locations. In 1998 Records obtained management approval for its own plan, and contracted a specialist recovery firm to salvage EP records nationally.

¹⁶ British Standards Institution, *BS 5454:1977, British Standard Recommendations for storage and exhibition of archival documents*, British Standards Institution, London, 1977. (Revised 1989 and 2000).

¹⁷ CNT Records: 30/1/1/1.

¹⁸ CNT Records file: 30/1/13, "Records – General and Policy – Disaster Recovery", 1992-1998, EP Records Centre.

¹⁹ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

Out-sourcing as part of a records management programme

Although in-house records storage was preferred by the records management programme from 1992, CNT took a hybrid approach, until everything could be brought in-house. It withdrew from BDM, but retained TWAS until the end of the case study period. This further confirmed the advantages of in-house storage to staff in Records, and departments, and contributed to management support for focusing activities at Stacey Bushes.

BDM

Withdrawal from BDM in 1994 regained direct control of holdings, and saved £52,000 in annual charges. Withdrawal was justified. Boxes and tubes were dirty, water-stained, and damaged. Contents were mouldy, damp and rusty. When PRO IDO Sharon Orton visited Stacey Bushes in 1995 she “expressed unhappiness at the poor state of the records withdrawn from BDM especially considering that some of them date from the 1980’s.”²⁰ Withdrawal exposed that CNT’s exact holdings were unknown. In 1995 a fire-proof safe containing Harlow microfilm was only retrieved by co-incidence. Howard Ruffman expressed concern and requested details of missing records. BDM ignored communication about twenty eight missing boxes, and so CNT lost some four hundred files.²¹

Large BDM boxes and tubes did not fit the shelving at Stacey Bushes, necessitating extensive re-boxing. Contents were inadequately listed, or unlisted.²² The inconvenience and effort required was deemed worthwhile as services provided to London from Stacey Bushes proved quicker than those provided within London by BDM. Stacey Bushes retrieved at individual file, not box, level, and provided accountability, knowledge of the records and the business they related to, and commitment to service standards. Glen House departments responded positively, and service further improved from 1996 when they moved records to and from Stacey Bushes without Glen House Records as intermediary.

TWAS

In 1978 Tyne and Wear County Council had established “a comprehensive records management programme operated by the Archives Service,” with an integral records centre.²³ In 1989 Tyne and Wear Archive Service (TWAS) invited CNT to store Washington records in its commercial records management unit (RMU) as it understood arrangements with BDM were “not proving entirely satisfactory”. It charged more, but retrieved individual files, and offered a review service linked to the record office as opposed to “passive storage”.²⁴

²⁰ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

²¹ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2; 30/3/4/3.

²² CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

²³ CNT Records: 30/1/21/13.

²⁴ CNT Records: 30/4/21.

However a general state of confusion and inactivity developed after Washington Office closed and North Office Records took responsibility. Contract terms and conditions were not clarified until 1994. It emerged in 1995 that TWAS had not tracked files borrowed by Washington and North Offices.²⁵ Peter Lane, who had once advocated TWAS, criticised the TWAS “Records Master List” for lacking clear titles or descriptions, creating “a major impediment” to locating items “which must reduce seriously the value of the claims made for the TWAS service”, which had “...not proved to be as good as we were led to expect...”. He claimed plans were poorly identified, “which as a result are completely anonymous and therefore useless to anyone”. He asserted that TWAS had not appraised archival items received from Washington, leaving them in the RMU at CNT expense, and had applied their own retention dates rather than follow CNT’s. Lane suggested that CNT “consider the feasibility of managing the residual items from Warrington.”²⁶ After the 1994 reorganisation, the situation was re-evaluated and CNT steadily reduced holdings and associated costs through proactive reviewing.²⁷ By March 1999, CNT determined on withdrawal.²⁸ Stacey Bushes accommodated the forty remaining boxes in 2000.²⁹

7.2 ESTABLISHING A RETENTION AND REVIEW PROGRAMME

Strategy: Developing a Retention Schedule

Before the 1990s, retention and disposal advice was not easily available within government circles, and where it existed was not detailed. The PRO did not actively produce guidance before 1998. The 1993 “Manual” simply stated that:

- “DROs must devise, promulgate, monitor and keep under review procedures intended to:
- a) secure the destruction of material no longer required ...”
 - b) subject other material to review to establish whether it has continuing value ...”³⁰

A review programme requires a retention/disposition schedule incorporating legal, regulatory and business requirements and identifying records of potential historic significance and archival value. This was recognised in the new towns within the 1966 report and the 1982 ACA/NTA report. CNT’s first Records Policy Document in 1987 and 1989 Supplement incorporated retention scheduling. The formal records management function emphasised the importance of a usable retention schedule when it produced a more detailed Records Policy Document and Retention Schedule in 1994, and periodically issued updates and revisions.

The DRO chose generic and thematic retention scheduling in 1994 over detailed departmental disposition schedules resulting from records surveys, partly because Records lacked resources to

²⁵ CNT North Office Records file: EST 1364.20, “Liaison with TWAS – Newcastle-upon-Tyne”, 1991-1999, consignments 3229/46/1-2 and 3229/47/1, EP Records Centre.

²⁶ CNT Records: 30/4/21.

²⁷ CNT Post-1998 Records Management file: 105/1/11/13, “Records Management – General and Policy – Tyne and Wear Archives Service”, 1998-2003, EP Records Centre.

²⁸ CNT Records: 30/1/21/13; 30/1/1/2.

²⁹ CNT Post-1998 Records: 105/1/11/13.

conduct surveys. Also, central registration and the informed RLO network enabled widespread identification of the organisation's holdings, and, by 1999, most records were closed and held within the records centre. Application of retention dates to file series at creation, to aid review and support moves to electronic filing, were addressed after 1999.

Strategy: Creating a Review Programme

The formal records management function deliberated the most effective reviewing approach. It faced competing priorities of creating space for incoming records against PRO requirements to review older material (which created little space). Insufficient space, moves and closures traditionally prompted disposal of records before 1992. Disposition was ad hoc, without context, and mistakes could occur, so resourcing it with consultants/temporaries was inappropriate. In 1989 Peter Lane said his experience at Washington was that "it takes as long to plan (ie. to ascertain what there is and to determine where items have to go), as it takes to do the work".³¹ The post-1992 function wanted systematised disposal, ensuring only what was needed was kept and only what was not needed destroyed, at the right time, and confidentially. Biggs continued MKDC practice at CNT Milton Keynes Office in 1992, disposing of records with approval of local officers. This continued under the "Three Year Plan" when all officers obtained – with some difficulty – departmental nominees "to clear records".³² The restructuring of 1993-94 disrupted progress as Records staff faced office moves, reorganised workloads, and redundancies, and there were apparently few departmental staff free to assist review.³³

The 1994 RPD significantly empowered Records staff:

"Review and disposal of records will be organised by Records management staff using the Retention Schedule, and will not be subject to departmental authorisation. However, Records Management staff will require the help and advice of departmental staff with the appropriate professional experience or background knowledge whenever necessary."

The DRO was concerned that redundancies meant "insufficient resources for dedicated reviewing". He proposed annual records review from 1995 to give each function and record type some attention. However, departmental staff were unsupportive, and Records lacked review resources. At Stacey Bushes in particular, on-going re-organisation prevented headway. Biggs tried to progress review following merger with Glen House Records in 1996. He agreed with the PRO to distinguish records of corporate and local interest.³⁴ The programme emphasised destruction, whilst ensuring archival selection, and arranging transfers as alternative to destruction under section 3(6) of the Public Records Act. Departmental staff often requested transfer of records alongside assets.

³⁰ Public Record Office, "Manual", section 2.1.7, np.

³¹ CNT Records: 30/4/21.

³² CNT Records file: 30/3/2/5, "Records – Departmental – Central (Milton Keynes) – Milton Keynes. Executive Committee (MKX)", 1992-1998, EP Records Centre.

³³ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2; 30/1/1/3.

³⁴ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

From 1994 consignments to Stacey Bushes were required to have review dates attached. In practice depositors allocated the standard first review. The reviewing backlog prevented timely disposal. After 1999 CORA automatically allocated a first review date to all records, and staff reset this as necessary when a record was examined at first review.

The establishment necessary for dedicated reviewing was achieved in 1998 when centralised at Milton Keynes. However, the programme was delayed by processing accumulated transfers from UDCs and CNT offices, and establishing a new corporate file system. In 1999, when attention could turn to review, Records faced the URA merger.

Issues: Reviewing in practice

From creation of Stacey Bushes Records Centre in 1985, particularly under CNT from 1992, more records were received than removed. New deposits arrived faster than available staff could review time-expired material. Random storage of files from different departments and functions within inherited boxes, resulting from early and poorly thought-out archiving processes at CNT, hindered space-creation. The PRO thirty year rule required review of older material which was difficult to assess without first-hand knowledge or recorded metadata of the organisations and records involved, and on-going liabilities and assets.

In practice, whilst review continued, it was limited by the volume and diversity of the overall records management workload, organisational change, and resource shortage. Staffing limitations (examined in Chapter 6) led to front-line services being prioritised – loans and returns, processing new consignments, registry, enquiries, and day-to-day management of staff and premises. In a pressurised environment, review of old records already boxed and shelved, demanded least attention. Turnover and changes in staff also affected review: a second archivist, recruited in 1996, given responsibility for the restarted review programme, left after thirteen months. Limited Records staff across CNT in 1994-98 hindered reviewing. Some CNT managers thought reduction of retention periods maximised destruction, but did not consider the need for reviewers. In 1997 the RMM told the Director of Finance “that reducing retention dates would make no immediate impact on holdings such was the backlog of reviewing, and the demands on Records resources other than reviewing.”³⁵

Furthermore, reviewing staff needed to be appropriate. At MKDC in 1983, the officer examining records issues, Leo Walsh, urged his colleagues that preparation and selection of archives was an academic exercise, rather than “another disposition of administration” which, if it was the approach taken, would likely see “selection suffer in the interests of expediency”. He forecast that corporation staff, being mostly technocrats, lacking “academic and philosophical education, essential requirements in those who select the corporations archives for posterity and the

³⁵ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

furtherance of scholarship” would find examination and selection of files “time consuming and boring & it is inevitable that short cuts will be taken and valuable archival material can be lost”. MKDC eventually moved to seconding professional archivists from Buckinghamshire to select archives.³⁶ In the 1960s, Howard Austin suggested appointing a Records Administration Officer in each CNT town to index and review, and his manager McKenzie thought that one experienced Records Officer could guide a “lower level man” in each town.³⁷ The Chief Estates Officer at CNT Welwyn Office in 1967 had said he would accept destruction and thinning of files “provided this is done with care by someone with a very sound knowledge of the department’s work”.³⁸ Without action, and a quarter century later, most CNT records awaiting review were far removed from their creating environment, and review by untrained or low-grade staff was even riskier. Some routine records were easily appraised. Others were more problematic, such as housing tenancy records, which departmental staff wanted kept to answer proof of tenancy enquiries, although CNT was no longer landlord. This troubled CNT/EP into the 2000s because of public relations concerns.³⁹

Ideally, a reviewer combined contextual understanding, with records management and archival principles and techniques. From 1992, for all but one year, there was only one qualified archivist in CNT. In theory, regional reviewers could be managed by a qualified DRO through the RPD’s retention schedule. However, this required subjective appraisal of individual files, and regional staff were not trained records managers. Reviewing in decentralised sections lacked consistency and accountability. Professional staff or trained para-professionals working to a retention schedule, with local knowledge and on-site supervision by the DRO, was the preferred approach taken from 1998. However, low organisational status and remuneration for records management, hindered recruitment and retention of suitable staff.

Review was conducted in registries where possible to avoid transfer to the records centre. Review in departments sometimes worked, as in Basildon in 1994 under a proactive and knowledgeable on-site RLO, although it was “delayed by intense sales and other end of year activities from the middle of February to the middle of April. As none of the Basildon-based staff are dedicated to records work, this has had a significant impact on reviewing...”.⁴⁰

Where records management had a low profile and status, there was a risk of departmental staff reviewing independently, contrary to policy. This was exposed when the DRO took responsibility for Glen House records in 1996. The Audit Department had unilaterally destroyed all audit reports from 1988 when it moved office in 1993, and all reports over seven years old in

³⁶ MKDC: 1/15/4/1.

³⁷ CNT Glen House: N22 /2.

³⁸ CNT Glen House: N22 /2.

³⁹ CNT Glen House: N22 /2.

⁴⁰ CNT Records: 30/3/4/2. The RLO was David Boon (1947-2007).

1995.⁴¹ In 1996 the Finance Directorate produced its own “Retention of Financial Records” within its “Financial Procedures Manual”.⁴² As records management was centralised and promoted, risks decreased, although regional isolationism still excluded the DRO, such as in 1996 when South Office considered “the reduction and relocation of the documentation” at Basildon, and transfer of deeds to Essex Record Office.⁴³

Before formal records management emphasised corporate ownership of records, many departments and individuals regarded records as their own and resisted interest in them by Records staff. In 1992 Property Services complained that files for storage had been destroyed by Glen House Records, and in future it would consider destruction before archiving, removing the need for Records staff to consider destroying files.⁴⁴

Uncertainty surrounded the papers of chairmen and board members sent and received as part of official duties. Were they public records or private papers? Copies within the organisation’s custody were subject to closure periods and other regulation. Copies retained by chairmen and board members who acted in a different capacity and manner to paid employees might be accessed and used differently. For example, in 1987 the private papers of Henry Chisholm (Corby Development Corporation’s chairman for twenty six years) were recorded as being with Professor Norman Pye of Leicester University for study, and “should provide a fascinating insight into the whole new town movement from its inception till the time when the Government started to close them down”.⁴⁵

In 1990 Les Field consulted the Head of Financial Services to identify financial records for destruction or long term storage. Field stated the importance of disposal with “the thought that the life of the Commission is now finite” and holding out the benefit of creating space for Finance as it “should lead to a considerable amount of material being removed...”⁴⁶ In 1995 North Records felt “much is dependent on departmental co-operation with reviewing”.⁴⁷ However, appeals for departmental assistance were largely unsuccessful throughout the case study. Staff were reluctant to agree destruction of records, and in a changing organisation, did not necessarily have knowledge to assist. When Biggs requested advice in reviewing Corby and Northampton records for which Central Office had become responsible in 1995, one of the few

⁴¹ CNT Records: 30/3/1/5.

⁴² CNT Records file: 30/3/1/11, “Records – Departmental – Corporate – Finance”, 1992-1998, EP Records Centre.

⁴³ CNT Glen House file: “Manpower Numbers Project”, 1995-1997, consignment 3603/8/2, EP Records Centre.

⁴⁴ CNT Glen House: AG 21.

⁴⁵ Northamptonshire RO: “Corby Catalogue”, vol 1, np.

⁴⁶ CNT Records: 30/3/1/11.

⁴⁷ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

respondents said she could “eliminate only a few records simply because I do not know enough about them”.⁴⁸

From 1992 CNT adopted MKDC practice of confining the contents of a single consignment to the records of one department or function, extending this to confine the functional records by town. This eased reviewing and maximised space-creation as related records were stored and reviewed together. However, inherited records required file by file, rather than series, review. There was little first-hand understanding of inherited records, and reviewers risked underestimating value. Even CNT-created records presented this problem as time passed, especially following departmental restructuring. Further complications arose where files continued in use by successor departments or organisations. Corporate memory was weak. Compilation of organisational histories informed appraisal, and instilled caution in reviewers lest information or evidence on current assets and liabilities be destroyed. Information significance changed over time, and access requests influenced disposal.

Individual file review was laborious, especially with voluminous legacy records as at CNT, although often necessary for unstructured records and because filing quality had deteriorated from the 1980s through absence or decentralisation of registries. It could improve the quality of archival selection, and ultimately of historical research, by uncovering worthy items. Selection at series level – even if identifiable – could cause survival of poor quality records. It was not sensible for repositories – especially if short of storage space – to take such records.

High-level organisational analysis and early retention/selection decisions, as advocated in the early 2000s by the PRO in response to the electronic environment, brush over legacy situations as exemplified by this case study, and presume the necessary level of records management organisation (and resourcing) in government bodies. The approach did not correlate to appraisal in practice of mixed records. The case study shows that a successor body could not necessarily analyse high-level functions and responsibilities of a defunct body and identify and appraise inherited records at series level accordingly. Series review was inappropriate for UDC and HAT records lacking structured filing systems. Furthermore, CNT/EP did not know for certain what records might become important for inherited business, despite liaison before transfer. Closing bodies and their sponsor departments were also unclear about this. In 1997 North Hull HAT was advised to be “very cautious about destroying files unless it is absolutely clear that they will not be of use to DOE or a successor body.”⁴⁹

The above factors conflicted with pressure to maximise destruction. Those advocating mass disposal failed to appreciate a need to record review decisions, so that they bore scrutiny. After

⁴⁸ CNT Records file: 30/3/2/11, “Records – Departmental – Central (Milton Keynes) – Land Development”, 1992-1998, EP Records Centre.

⁴⁹ North Hull Housing Action Trust file: CES/001/012, “Archive”, 1996-1999, consignment NHHAT/GEN45/5, EP Records Centre.

1999 Records obtained management approval to assess its oldest records for historic significance alone, regardless of on-going assets and liabilities. Whilst this simplified review, recruitment of reviewers remained unresolved.

Archival liaison

The PRO did not undertake reviewing at CNT until the DRO approached them in 1993. In 1994-95 the IDO began researching CNT history to aid selection. Accepting that review was hampered by under-resourcing, and that CNT could not accurately identify how many records were over thirty years old, the PRO supported rationalisation in 1996 and centralisation in 1998 as the best platform for review.⁵⁰

Discussions took place from 1994 with local authority record offices to establish selection interests. All received the 1994 RPD and were advised that CNT was “systematically reviewing its record holdings in accordance with this Document” and “will of course consult you at the appropriate times regarding items of interest to your record office”.⁵¹ Transfers took place from 1994. Before 1992 archivists typically made selections during office closures. Afterwards, CNT’s formal function selected archives. Where archivists did not deal directly with the DRO they dealt with designated regional staff. The DRO ensured he met archivists to establish selection criteria and principles. Control was achieved after the 1998 centralisation. However, echoes of pre-1992 arose with transfer of UDCs and HATs, where archivists (with no relationship to CNT) and local interest groups sought records direct. CNT/EP attempted regulation through pre-transfer liaison to establish its role and public record requirements. However, this was hindered by lack of records management staff in transferring bodies.

7.3 DISPOSITION OF RECORDS⁵²

The Legislative Basis for Disposition

“DROs must ensure that records selected for permanent preservation are prepared for transfer and transferred to the PRO or place of deposit not later than 30 years after they were created. Those which cannot be opened or cannot be transferred and must be either made subject to extended closure or retained within the department must be identified and application made for permission to retain the records or for their closure period to be extended. The DRO must also identify any records which can be made available before the end of the 30 year period...”⁵³

Public record status informed disposition of records by the formal records management function after 1992. This maintained the approach agreed in 1966 and 1984 of depositing corporate records in the PRO, and those of primarily local interest in places of deposit appointed under

⁵⁰ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

⁵¹ CNT Records file: 30/1/21, “County Archivists”, (16 sub-files), 1992-1998, EP Records Centre.

⁵² See also Chapter 8 for issues for archival successor bodies.

⁵³ Public Record Office, “Manual”, section 2.1.8, np.

section 4(1) of the Public Records Act.⁵⁴ As DRO in 1993 Biggs reconfirmed this strategy with the PRO.

There was uncertainty in 1996-97 over CNT's successor. If a different legal entity without public record status body, its own records would not be public records, whilst those inherited from CNT would be. The prospect of further complexity regarding legal status and disposition concerned the DRO.⁵⁵ It was decided that UDC and HAT records would follow the new town precedent and become public records on inheritance by CNT, and be treated as of local interest. When the PRO was approached by CNT and Hull City Archives in 1998 as to the latter's status for holding North Hull HAT records, the records were confirmed as public records because of the HAT's impending transfer to CNT.⁵⁶

Dividing records between national and local repositories risked duplication, or gaps. CNT's 1968 report had acknowledged inevitable duplication of local committee minutes and policy correspondence, but felt it might be desirable to preserve some records in two places.⁵⁷ The decentralised Records sections of 1993-98 handled archival selection, and county archivists selected some items which, with the application of a centralised strategy, would not have been offered. For example, locally-held copies of CNT annual reports were taken. The centralised Records section of 1998 then had difficulty compiling complete sets for internal reference and the PRO. The DRO would have made a single national deposit with the PRO.

In 1993 CNT was surprised to discover that although there had been a formal relationship with the PRO for nine years, not all the repositories holding, or due to hold, new town records were registered places of deposit. The PRO agreed to address this.⁵⁸ Records already in unregistered places had no guarantee of secure and proper storage. CNT then found some record offices had sub-deposited to film archives. Lancashire transferred Central Lancashire and Skelmersdale films to North West Film Archive (NWFA), which was not a place of deposit, and again the DRO had to press the PRO to rectify this oversight.⁵⁹

Deposit Issues – PRO

Public record status proved a double-edged sword. It brought order and authority for formal records management. However, PRO procedures placed archival preparation of deposits with the depositor, and were prescriptive, time-consuming, and staff-intensive, which proved especially difficult for NDPBs and agencies to resource. Given CNT's under-resourcing for records work,

⁵⁴ CNT Glen House: N22/2.

⁵⁵ CNT Records: 30/1/1/1; 30/1/24.

⁵⁶ North Hull HAT: CES/001/012.

⁵⁷ The report did not specify why it was desirable, but presumably it was felt the information was valuable at national and local level, relevant to both collections, and researchers would not have to visit different repositories.

⁵⁸ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

stringent procedures for removing staples and paper clips, packaging, listing records to a PRO template and producing supporting documentation for transfer were daunting. In 1995 the DRO raised concerns, but the PRO replied that CNT must conform. CNT and the PRO expected improvement with rationalisation of staff into a centralised records management location.⁶⁰

Local places of deposit did not present this problem and so were easier to deposit with, whilst still meeting public record requirements. As records of local interest formed the bulk of holdings and their disposal generated most space, these were prioritised. Set against CNT's own business needs, little could be deposited with the PRO. The only deposit from Glen House was board papers, which took six years to prepare. No records were transferred from Milton Keynes in 1996-2000.⁶¹

Difficulties were also illustrated by the New Towns Association (NTA) records. The PRO inspected these in 1990, whilst in MKDC's custody. The MKDC General Manager feared that if the NTA secretaryship passed to a Scottish corporation the records would transfer to the Scottish Record Office. It was felt that they should remain in England where the majority of corporations, and CNT, had operated. The PRO agreed that, although NTA did not fit public record body criteria, it would be in the interests of researchers for selected records to be in the PRO alongside those of CNT, and it would select and prepare for transfer.⁶² Records were not deposited until after 1999 because the PRO itself encountered difficulties with storage space and staff availability.

Deposit Issues – Local Authority Record Offices

Local record offices generally took what the formal function at CNT offered, and good relationships were typified by an Essex Record Office newsletter feature in 1997 on Basildon Plotlands, praising the invaluable co-operation of Basildon Development Corporation and CNT staff in securing archival records.⁶³ However, there were some concerns.

Uniform or consistent selection criteria were not applied by county archivists, even within record offices, as over time archivists (and their subjective approaches) changed. The ACA/NTA report of 1982 was only high-level guidance, and soon forgotten. The author was not made aware of it as an MKDC archivist in 1987-92. There were disagreements about whether material had been deposited. In 1989, Lane complained that Durham, (attributed to a vacancy in county archivist) had not inspected material they had requested "and say they have taken yet manifestly have never

⁵⁹ CNT Records file: 30/1/21/16, "Records – General and Policy – County Archivists – North West Film Archive", 1992-1998, EP Records Centre.

⁶⁰ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

⁶¹ CNT Records file: 30/3/1/7, "Records – Departmental – Corporate – Chairman/Board", 1992-1998, EP Records Centre; CNT Records: 30/1/1/2; 30/1/3/1.

⁶² CNT Records: 30/1/1/2; 30/1/3/1; 30/1/1/1.

⁶³ Essex Record Office, "Plotlands", *Update*, no 31, Summer 1997, Chelmsford, Essex Record Office, 1997, np.

received, plus further material that clearly they have missed for one reason or another during visits to the development corporation office. An example are the five “Shott Glass” files they selected and claim to hold when these and two more are at the Washington Office.”⁶⁴

In 1989-90 Moon and Lane discussed holding a seminar to regulate disparate county archive selection policies and cataloguing. Lane’s “general impression” of archivists encountered was that they were “unusually ignorant” of new towns, the wealth of information they gathered, and its future value. Lane unsuccessfully suggested that the PRO “kick off” the meeting and lend authority to CNT.⁶⁵ From 1992 the situation was unchanged amongst archivists, but improved in CNT where Records staff led appraisal and selection using the revised RPD and in-house knowledge. Archivists were consulted regarding selection and ultimately CNT accepted refusals. The opinions of CNT Records staff, especially those professionally-qualified, carried weight with archivists. Centralisation in 1998 ensured consistency of CNT’s approach.

CNT periodically recalled records from record offices and sometimes it was difficult to identify and locate records believed deposited because they were unlisted at transfer and remained uncatalogued on deposit.⁶⁶ The difficulty CNT had in identifying records deposited by corporations before transfer to CNT in the 1980s, continued in 1998 with UDCs, despite written guidance. Tyne and Wear Development Corporation (TWDC) photographs were deposited with TWAS in 1998 without CNT’s knowledge, and files which TWDC had wanted destroyed had been archived.⁶⁷ The DRO was concerned to identify and centralise catalogues and accession lists held by decentralised sections to avoid loss. For example, the catalogue of English Estates records deposited at TWAS in 1985, was inherited by URA at Gateshead in 1993, and taken by transferring staff to the North East RDA in 1998.⁶⁸

Local Interests

As early as 1966 when Peter Walne approached CNT, the Town Clerk of Hemel Hempstead registered his council’s desire “to keep local records locally”, in its new “archive room”. He demanded inclusion in the working group, and sight of the report “before anything is done about it”.⁶⁹ It was an early example of parochialism over disposition of new town archives, to which town-orientated corporation and CNT staff were often sympathetic. In 1977 when CNT considered town memorials to itself and corporations, Brigadier Biggs at Welwyn Hatfield suggested “heritage museums” to “tell the story of the growth of each of them as New Towns” to which CNT could contribute “a great deal of photographic and other material”.⁷⁰ In 1978 he

⁶⁴ CNT Records: 30/4/21.

⁶⁵ CNT Records: 30/1/1/1.

⁶⁶ CNT Records: 30/3/3/2. This issue, from the viewpoint of archivists, is examined in Chapter 8.

⁶⁷ CNT Post-1998 Records: 105/1/11/13.

⁶⁸ CNT Post-1998 Records: 105/1/11/13.

⁶⁹ CNT Glen House: N22/2.

⁷⁰ CNT Glen House file: 73/1, “Commemoration of Commission Work”, 1977, consignment CNT 289, EP Records Centre.

qualified his offer of records to Walne with “if they do not find another home in (say) a heritage museum...”.⁷¹ Even Hilary Moon seemed in 1989 to favour local interests when she stated with regard to Warrington records that it “would seem a pity, and may cause local resentment, if all information, photographs etc. are to be held at the Records Office in Chester.”⁷² The pull of local and special interest groups continued after a formal records management section existed, but conflict with policy and public record status could be highlighted. However, from a regionalised position Records could not always ensure correct processes. For instance, in 1993 MKDC three-dimensional models were given by Milton Keynes Office to Buckinghamshire County Museum. Regional staff rebutted the suggestion that Public Records Act section 3(6) approval should be sought, on the grounds that disposition had been agreed by MKDC before closure. In 2005 it emerged that further models had been disposed of in 1997 without the DRO’s involvement or 3(6) approval.⁷³ This demonstrates the risk to policy and procedures, and the effect of placing Records within a local structure. It took time for a proactive, profile-raising, records management function to discourage independent action.

Closures of corporations and CNT local offices without formal records management in place, had, despite involvement of county archivists, seen records dispersed to libraries, museums and local groups.⁷⁴ Local archivists worried about the effect of local interests on their collecting policies.⁷⁵ The County Archivist of Worcestershire was unhappy that Redditch photographs had gone to Redditch Library in 1985, but the Library transferred them to him in 1995 to rejoin the new town archive.⁷⁶ The DRO recognised local sensitivities and ambivalent public record status in these cases, but always expressed the view that new town records of local interest were best kept together in local authority record offices.

Parochial interest in records could show in desire for town record offices. If a local authority could establish an approved place of deposit, there was no reason for CNT, the PRO or a county record office to resist. A Buckinghamshire branch record office in Milton Keynes had been discussed since the 1980s, and since 1982 MKDC had favoured a city archive location above deposit in Aylesbury, but funding never materialised.⁷⁷ In 1997 Milton Keynes became a unitary

⁷¹ Hertfordshire RO file: E8.

⁷² CNT North Office Records file: EST 1364, “Records General Special Vol”, 1989-1994, consignment 1915/89/1-3, EP Records Centre.

⁷³ CNT Records file: 30/2/1/5, “Records – Office Administration – Central Registry – Models”, 1992-1998, EP Records Centre.

⁷⁴ CNT Glen House: RE5(a); CNT Records: 30/1/1/2; Interview: 14 Feb 1996, Ruth Bagley, Head of Records and Research, Shropshire – Author’s Notes.

⁷⁵ They experienced similar problems with local authority records in local government reorganisation in 1974. Nicholas Kingsley, “Learning the Lessons of the Past: The Fate of the Pre-1974 Local Authority Archives”, unpublished report to the National Council on Archives, 1994.

⁷⁶ CNT Records: 30/3/5/3.

⁷⁷ Buckinghamshire Record Office office files: GP.12/16/1, “Minutes MKDC Museum and Related Services Liaison Committee 1982-1988” and “Fieldwork – Milton Keynes Development Corporation, 1981-1988”, 1981-1988; GP.12/16/2, MKDC Proposed Branch R.O., 1984-1991; GP.12/16/2(a), MK Branch Office General information re RO layout etc”, 1982-1987;

authority and wanted its own repository. The council had a three year agreement with Buckinghamshire County Council for archive provision for Milton Keynes local authority records but was considering – with local CNT help for a site – creating an Archive and Local Studies Centre to hold all Milton Keynes archives. The council had no understanding of Public Records Act requirements or records management procedures. One councillor expressed horror that CNT had destroyed records. When officers investigated costs, the idea was deferred, and an arrangement with Buckinghamshire continued beyond this case study.⁷⁸

New Towns Urban Design Archive (NTUDA)

In the absence of a comprehensive and well-understood disposition and archival selection policy for new town records, external users and potential users demonstrated concerns about survival and access issues. In 1981 the New Towns Research Unit at the Open University Library wanted to establish a collection of materials related to the new towns movement, and as “many Development Corporations are reaching the end of their lifespan, we are concerned that this may become increasingly difficult.” New town bodies were consulted about depositing audio-visual material into “some form of central archive”. CNT Hemel Hempstead Office responded that upon wind-up archives would “likely” be “split between the Herts County Archives and the local Museum Committee”.⁷⁹

A proposed national New Towns Centre at Milton Keynes was discussed in the 1980s.⁸⁰ Hatfield Polytechnic (subsequently University of Hertfordshire) obtained funding “to carry out a project concerning the development of a multi-media archive that includes text, photographs, sound recordings and video”. A steering committee, including CNT and MKDC, was to undertake a pilot project from 1991 to 1993, with possible extension to a more detailed archive. It was “hoped that at the end of the two year period the material gathered could be made available to schools, colleges, etc as an educational resource.”⁸¹

Hilary Moon was concerned in 1992 that a former MKDC planning director was breaching CNT records policy and the Public Records Act by promoting a New Towns Urban Design Archive (NTUDA) and contacting staff. She argued that the university was not a place of deposit, and records were not to be removed from record offices, with whom CNT risked “destroying the

GP.12/16/3, “MKDC Archivist Reports and Notes of Liaison Meetings”, 1985-1989; GP.12/16/4, “Milton Keynes Proposed New Towns Centre”, 1985-1989, Buckinghamshire Record Office.

⁷⁸ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2; CNT Records file: 30/1/27, “Records – General and Policy – Milton Keynes Council”, 1992-1998, EP Records Centre. In 2005, Cambridgeshire Record Office transferred the Peterborough New Town collection to the new archive office within the Library of Peterborough City Council (unitary authority).

⁷⁹ CNT Hemel Hempstead: 01/5/13.

⁸⁰ MKDC file: “New Towns Association/Corporations”, 1984-1987, consignment 314/9/4, EP Records Centre; Buckinghamshire RO: GP.12/16/4.

⁸¹ Northamptonshire RO: Box File.

excellent relationships”.⁸² In 1993 the PRO confirmed that NTUDA was not an acceptable repository. By 1994 it “seems accepted that N.T.U.D.A. cannot have original material,” although the project was still “intended as a national archive of material which would otherwise be difficult to locate and access in a single source”.⁸³

The NTUDA experience demonstrated how senior management interest and financial support could be captured by a records-related project – due to involvement of external bodies, and the information technology and marketing aspects. Yet, the same managers overlooked possibilities of in-house exploitation of information or of capitalising on the knowledge of their own Records staff by involving them in the project.⁸⁴

Alternatives to Archival Selection

Records management ensured that destruction was performed confidentially via incineration or shredding. Destruction was the simplest means of disposal of non-archival material. However, during asset disposal, CNT regularly passed operational records to new owners, which involved much work for Records staff. CNT was said to use section 3(6) of the Public Records Acts more than any other department.⁸⁵ Prior to 1992, without a dedicated records management function, the 3(6) process was ignored. The DRO later submitted retrospective applications where it was discovered that staff had transferred records without permission.⁸⁶ He was concerned that CNT’s disclaimers were not always used, and where records were transferred ahead of signing the disclaimer, it proved difficult to get them completed retrospectively.⁸⁷ However, effective application of a statutory procedure needs all parties to play their part, and the PRO did not always match Records’ efforts to follow PRO procedures. It frequently failed to give CNT’s 3(6) applications the timely turnaround needed where regular transfer of operational records was a business requirement.⁸⁸ In 1995 the DRO informed the PRO “that the delay in the return of these forms is causing embarrassment and that records may have to be transferred before approval.”⁸⁹

7.4 SUMMARY

This chapter examined implementation by formal CNT records management after 1992 of the key records management functions of storage, review and disposition.

⁸² Northamptonshire RO: Box File; CNT Records file: 30/1/11, “Records – General and Policy – New Towns Urban Design Archive (NTUDA)”, 1992-1998, EP Records Centre.

⁸³ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

⁸⁴ CNT interest in NTUDA gave way to the Planning Exchange project, covered in Chapter 6.5 Access.

⁸⁵ Author’s Knowledge.

⁸⁶ CNT Records: 30/1/1/3.

⁸⁷ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

⁸⁸ CNT Records: 30/2/1/5.

⁸⁹ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

Storage

Well-organised commercial storage should improve upon low quality in-house storage.

However, CNT's experiences of commercial out-sourcing were unsatisfactory. The case study highlights weaknesses in external providers. They cannot understand the records, or the creating organisations, as well as the organisations themselves. The risks and problems this poses for access and appropriate disposal are magnified when those records are disorganised through lack of records management application early in the records life-cycle, and when there is no formal records management within the organisation to manage out-sourcing.

In contrast, the in-house Stacey Bushes Records Centre was well-regarded internally and externally for its organisation and services. The mismatch between staffing, volume and timescale of records input was combatted when trained staff exercised consistent controls, procedures and strategy. Stacey Bushes facilitated centralisation of CNT's closed and inherited records, and provided a working base for a corporate establishment, which enabled the organisation to operate records management with minimum staff and premises. The records centre, and its successful services, were key to the department's long-term survival through many reorganisations. An in-house records centre allowed CNT/EP to prepare for the information access regime far better than many Government bodies. The case study data supports in-house records storage (where feasible) as the preferred option.

Review

The case study shows the cumulative effect of failing to review records systematically. Unnecessary retention of large quantities of records made identification and analysis of liabilities and assets more difficult. The organisation (and therefore the Government and taxpayer) ultimately suffered. Early investment of resources for effective and timely review would have paid long-term dividends in efficiency, smooth operations, assurance, and storage-savings, and have offered the possibility of gradually down-sizing the CNT/EP Records Centre and focusing staff on current business.

This begs the question of whether, with limited resources, review should be prioritised over other activities. However, if review is targeted at the expense of good record-keeping practice at current and semi-current stages, records management risks being perceived as peripheral to current business, and problems encountered at the closed stage never end. The study indicates that an organisation, and events, do not permit neat and orderly stages and strategies, and that records management has to continually respond to change. In theory, the advent of electronic records management will assist future review by forcing application of retention dates to electronic records at creation. However, apart from reservations about the 'paperless office', and the expectation that legacy paper will continue in parallel with electronic records within organisations for several decades yet, an effective electronic environment requires implementation of organisational systems such as edrms, and a records and information

management culture. Time, and trained staff, are still required for electronic review, and to address other issues associated with digital records and record-keeping. The case study indicates that the best strategic approach was taken, and that formal records management offered the best solution to backlog accumulations from multiple organisations, although handicapped by resource limitations.

Disposition

Timely and appropriate disposition of records in the case study was, once public record status was resolved in 1984, theoretically straightforward. Records of national significance would go to the PRO and those of local interest to local repositories. Non-archival material would be destroyed or passed to another body. The case study indicates the best way to co-ordinate this, as demonstrated by the fact that this did not really happen in 1984-92, was via formal records management. However, experiences from 1992 show that even with a dedicated function it was not straightforward because resourcing, communication, co-operation, and consistency were lacking, not only within CNT but also archival repositories. This meant that disposition was not performed quickly or comprehensively.

Case study data further emphasises that quality archival selection depended on in-house experienced records managers with archival knowledge. The archives accrued by repositories before 1992 were largely a result of rescue missions, or with subjective selection or passive receipt of records by archive staff who did not have the knowledge or time for discernment. Title or project were insufficient criteria for accurate archival selection. A review process should ensure archival preservation of primary material sufficient to record and allow understanding of an organisation and its impact. Too much, or too poor, material, diminishes both quality of the archive and value to the researcher. Archival selection and disposition in the context of accumulated and inherited records, created and managed without the benefit of records management, necessitated examination and understanding of content and context, and largely required individual review. Passage of time might make destruction decisions easier, but might make assessment harder. Operational selection policies have limited value when records management has not underpinned records creation and maintenance, and encourage unnecessary retention of non-archival records. Early appraisal and disposal pose assessment difficulties and business risks.

Chapters 6 and 7 have analysed CNT's formal records management function's key strategies of life-cycle records management and in-house storage. Both choice and organisational circumstance led the function to include deeds management and develop research and enquiry services. This open and proactive approach to broader service provision was considered the means to extend the function's influence and improve organisational records quality. The formal function addressed all causes, issues, and results of poor records management. However, it was

hampered by application within a context of constant and large-scale organisational change, the implications of which are examined in further detail in Chapter 8.

CHAPTER 8: THE EFFECTS OF ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE

Chapters 2-4 showed that the case study exhibited almost constant change – in personnel, and via restructuring and reorganisation, privatisation, out-sourcing, transfer of functions, mergers, takeovers and closures. Chapter 5 examined key areas giving impetus for records management, all of which involved organisational change. Chapters 6-7 analysed implementation and resourcing of professional records management at CNT from 1992 within a changing organisational setting. This chapter details the implications and effects of organisational change upon records, records management, and places of deposit that received records resulting from, or affected by, change. It illustrates and compares situations across the chronology of the case study, before and after formal records management existed. It demonstrates from such data the importance of good records management during organisational change. Evidence suggests that experiences of organisations with intentionally finite existence, resemble those which faced unexpected change or abolition, such as local authorities. This indicates a fundamental and widespread problem for the application of records management in the public sector, suggesting a response strategy at Government-level is required.

The following themes are examined:

- Change emanating from internal reorganisations and restructurings.
- Organisational reliance on privatisation and out-sourcing.
- Change brought through acquisition or merger.
- The effects of transferring functions and assets.
- Preparedness for closure.
- Key issues arising for places of deposit.

Although different types of change are discussed individually, they share commonality, notably staff turnover and physical movement of records. Elements of change can be large-scale and may occur simultaneously. They have both positive and negative attributes, posing both threats and opportunities for records management, and challenging on-going constructive records management. All emerge within the case study.

Change can provide records managers with opportunities to be proactive professionally, take initiatives, win allies, showcase skills, and tangibly demonstrate value. A changing environment may permit improvements to staffing structures and numbers, record-keeping systems, or integration of disparate systems. Change can draw upon or enhance a records manager's interpersonal, managerial and project management skills.

Records and records management risks include staff demoralisation and pressure, poor communication, low prioritisation, loss of corporate memory, repetition and duplication of work. Staff may feel vulnerable and alienated, and stress may affect performance at a critical period.

This may translate into poor record-keeping, disinterest in preparing records for closure, or deliberate sabotage. Information-sharing can suffer where staff have identified closely with 'their' records, or where records have provided job purpose and security. Poor communication magnifies uncertainty. It may occur deliberately because of confidentiality, or simply from systems breakdown in a changing environment. It may result from discord or competition between opposite numbers in closing and successor bodies, or merging organisations. Records integrity and procedural compliance remain vital during upheaval, yet senior management may give low priority to records management amongst multiple considerations. Where organisational knowledge management systems fail to transcend experienced staff turnover, identification, location, and understanding of records and information is affected. In an altered environment, records managers may lose position, status, and influence. Systems, procedures and guidance may need amending or replacing, thereby creating an enormous workload for limited resources.

8.1 RESTRUCTURINGS

Motivation for Restructuring

Case study data shows internal re-organisation and restructuring brought changes in personnel, job titles, reporting lines, departmental names, remits and physical locations. Moves affected single buildings or entire organisations, consolidating several locations into one, or increasing one corporate centre into multiple regional offices.

Reorganisation could result from adapting to external changes – an acquisition or merger (for EP for example in 1999), market forces, or instructions from the sponsor department. It could simply be associated with new line management, although typically justification would focus on organisational needs and benefits rather than issues of personality. For example, CNT's new Director of Finance removed the Internal Audit section at Glen House in 1993 by restructuring and relocating it.¹ Even junior staff departures could prompt minor restructurings. Any reorganisation could affect office practices, and therefore records.

Instigators generally present reorganisations as opportunities or catalysts for new, improved working.² However, management enthusiasm can contrast with staff views. A sarcastic note appeared on many CNT office walls in the 1990s:

"Gaius Petronius in 66 AD stated "...we tend to meet any new situation by re-organising, and a wonderful method it can be for creating the illusion of progress whilst producing confusion, inefficiency and demoralisation...". Sounds familiar, does it not?..."³

¹ CNT Records: 30/3/1/5.

² One bank claimed to consolidate 14 offices and 8000 staff into one building, introducing an electronic document system across 250 departments which "eliminated" 70% of paper holdings reducing storage from 5.2 metres per person to 2 metres. Computing, "HSBC moves to company-wide document storage standard", *Computing*, 24 April 2003, p12.

³ Author's Knowledge.

Risk: Reversal of decisions and achievements

Without embedded records management, long-strived for progress could quickly unravel.⁴

CNT's corporate Records function was only six months old when record officers were reorganised in 1992 to report mainly to local Executive Officers, only maintaining corporate line management for policy. In the 1993 external appointments freeze, Records was not categorised under "Exceptional Circumstances", and the Director of Corporate Services said whilst he "sympathised he could do nothing to help".⁵

The 1994 regionalisation fundamentally affected record-keeping. It halted the recently-agreed "Three Year Plan"⁶ and associated targets, and weakened the DRO's capacity to exercise consistent and accountable corporate records management. The consultants had limited time to understand the organisation, yet made judgements and recommendations affecting structure and strategy. Records posts were targeted to achieve establishment reduction. Corporate Records staff were undefended by regional managers, and their own corporate director was contemplating a new role. Records staff alone were too junior to influence decisions. The DRO was informed only minutes before cuts were announced to staff. The Staff Side chairman asserted that Records staff had been treated differently to all other staff, but objections that cutting the posts contravened undertakings to not alter departments that had recently been restructured were ignored.⁷ This restructuring exemplifies risks to records management staff where both their existence, and position in a structure, is not firmly established and accepted, but relies upon champions. Public record status and PRO liaison failed to prevent cuts.

In January 1994 the Records Management Meeting (RMM) noted that "Records staff are unsettled, and unsure of the service they are to perform from 1st April" and "At Telford there seems to be no management plan to disband Central Registry despite two posts being made redundant." Records managers were recommended to report to their regional directors on the service that could realistically be provided.⁸ There was no contingency planning for records management with less staff, and it could have become chaotic and ineffective but for the DRO's implementation of intellectual registry and departmental "records liaison officers" (RLOs).⁹ This prevented completely departmentalised, decentralised current record-keeping, whilst focusing available staff on managing closed records.

⁴ In 1986 the Arts Council of Great Britain appointed a permanent Records Officer for the first time in forty years. In 1987 the fledgling records management programme was axed to redirect monies to marketing. Serena Kelly, "Arts Council Withdraws Funding", *Records Management Bulletin*, No 19, April 1987, p3.

⁵ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

⁶ The "Three Year Plan" was detailed in Chapter 6.1.

⁷ CNT Records file: 30/1/1/13, "Records – General and Policy – Records Management – Restructuring:1994", 1992-1998, EP Records Centre.

⁸ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

⁹ See Chapter 6.3 Establishing Registry Control.

The RMM warned the Director of Corporate Services:

“The reduction in staff numbers, given records workload, tasks and priorities, means that present central registry services cannot be maintained. The resulting devolution of current record activities from records staff to “operational groupings” poses risks to the standard of current record keeping within C.N.T., and therefore to the task of appraisal and disposal. The need for records to be correctly maintained at source and throughout their lifespan therefore has training implications for the operational teams. The crucial “intellectual” role of Records staff in guiding operational units in records matters needs to be recognised and applied. Due to the loss of staff and Registry control there is likely to be a significant residue of non-sorted records in 1998. The prospect of increased use and turnover of consultancies requires vigorous pursuit of files from outgoing firms, and the insertion of robust procedures and contractual clauses for new consultancies, with procedures and clauses adhered to by C.N.T. staff.”¹⁰

After the restructuring, management, theoretically, reaffirmed the importance of records management. At the team-building day for 1998 Agency senior staff “records were recognised as an issue and it was felt that records management should be part of any C.N.T. business plan.”¹¹

Risk: Disruption to agreed systems and existing relationships

The restructuring of Records in 1993-94 exemplifies how effective systems could be dismantled. Notably, the registries built-up at three of the four offices were de-railed. At the time, Records staff resented this, although intellectual control would later suit an electronic environment. Negative effects cascaded from the restructure. For example, the Records Manager (North) sent records out of his custody into departments, such as Skelmersdale microfilm to the engineers. Regionalised reporting lines meant the DRO could not prevent this.¹²

Routine procedures were disrupted. The Records Manager (North) complained that the local Planning Department had transferred unidentified files to storage. A volunteer for redundancy had been nominated to rectify this, but after two weeks had done nothing and her services were withdrawn, leaving the work for Records staff. He suggested that this “bodes ill for departmental co-operation, and use of redundant staff.”¹³

Some departmental staff did not adjust to changed circumstances and continued records practices unnecessarily and unchecked. In 1997 Biggs discovered that North Office Legal were still sending contract documentation to the Glen House employee who had received them prior to the corporate Legal Directorate closure in 1994. Despite working in a different capacity for three years, he stored them by his desk, until, lacking room, he wanted them moved to closed storage. Biggs informed both parties that the practice should have stopped in 1994.¹⁴

¹⁰ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

¹¹ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

¹² CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

¹³ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

¹⁴ CNT Records: 30/3/4/5; 30/3/3/2.

Risk: Movement of records and associated problems

Records passed around the new town organisations during restructurings, office moves, and reorganisations for decades without formal records management in place. Individuals influenced how well this was managed and recorded. The Administration Directorate produced a staff booklet for MKDC's headquarters relocation in 1984, including a paragraph on moving files and making "certain that no materials which may have archival value or be of interest to posterity are lost."¹⁵ However, good practice was atypical. The Durham archivist working on Aycliffe and Peterlee records believed that they had become "jumbled up" in various accommodation moves.¹⁶ The poor state of many new town records reflected frequent organisational change without formal records controls.

Without systems and controls, local knowledge and experience was needed to locate records. Hilary Moon found this with records dispersed to several locations after closure of Northampton Office. There was a business risk if information could not be retrieved, and Moon suggested the cost of indexing records was justified as a dispute in Northampton might cost CNT £5,000,000.¹⁷

CNT's 1993-94 regionalisation caused considerable movement of records. Disbanded corporate functions at London dispersed records and deeds, not only within Glen House to South Office teams, but to regional offices. No liaison with Records occurred, so records were neither closed for reference only before distribution, nor new files started by new functions. The outgoing Director of Legal Services in 1994 sent lists to the recipients of records, without informing Records. Distribution by others was not necessarily recorded. This emphasises the lack of consideration given to record management at Glen House, and within the wider restructuring.¹⁸

Telford Office moves resulted in deeds and semi-current files being moved to Stafford Park Records Centre. Relocation was completed in three months but created a work backlog and "Records staff morale was very low".¹⁹ At Milton Keynes, Records staff still dealt with the effects of the 1994 restructuring two years later, sorting and listing records abandoned in empty rooms by departmental staff.

Record-keeping failings were revealed at times of change. In 1993 the Records Officer (South) could only estimate numbers of current Corby and Northampton files transferring to Milton Keynes with responsibility for those two towns, because his section operated without a central

¹⁵ Milton Keynes Development Corporation, "We're On Our Way To CMK", unpublished booklet, 1984, EP Records Centre.

¹⁶ Interview: 28 July 1997, Jennifer Gill, County Archivist of Durham – Author's Notes.

¹⁷ CNT Records: 30/1/1/1.

¹⁸ CNT Records file: 30/3/1/13, "Records – Departmental – Corporate – Legal", 1992-1998, EP Records Centre.

¹⁹ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

index of current departmental files.²⁰ In 1994 he blamed departmental arrangements for files transferring “in a mess”, but the RMM advised that transfers should involve record officers.²¹

Moving records without care created confusion, and those already poorly identified became more muddled when moved. This showed when Glen House Records sent records to North and West Midlands offices in 1994-95 to reduce its storage requirements at Stacey Bushes. North Office reviewed Aycliffe and Peterlee boxes received direct from BDM without consulting the DRO. Glen House Records did not provide lists for all records removed from Stacey Bushes and included corporate material that should have remained. Errors could remain long undiscovered. In 1997 North Office found contract documents for South towns in boxes sent in 1994.²²

Although Records tried to plan for the Central Office relocation in 1997 as soon as it was announced, complications arose from the new office’s dual role as the post-1998 CNT headquarters. It was unclear who was making decisions about post-1998 record-keeping and locations. More immediate difficulties arose in 1996 because news of moving “had already caused an influx of semi-current files into Registry” in the knowledge that they would then be archived to the Records Centre by Records staff rather than from office locations by departmental staff.²³ Records had its own upheaval clearing the registry, and ensuring service provision in the new location, where a small registry was maintained until incorporated in the fully-centralised records centre in 2002.

Risk: Effect on Status

Major restructuring could have fundamental legislative implications. In 1996 the PRO took the view that if CNT was replaced by another statutory body in 1998, the new body would not automatically be a public record body. Even if CNT survived, the PRO did not, initially, want inherited records of UDCs and HATs to be public records.²⁴ Yet, the PRO would expect all pre-1998 CNT records inherited by a new body to be managed as public records, even if continuation files were not. The DRO considered this detrimental for continuity and efficient records management, and feared that CNT’s records management could unravel without public record status. Best practice counted little with executive management when allocating limited resources to delivery teams, and core functions as defined by the sponsor body and corporate plans. Records management, without legal compliance or an external watchdog, risked dismissal as an expendable luxury by unsympathetic decision-makers.

²⁰ CNT Records: 30/2/1/1.

²¹ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

²² CNT Records: 30/3/3/2.

²³ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

²⁴ CNT Records: 30/1/24. See also Chapter 7.3 Disposition of Records. In practice, UDC and HAT records became public records on inheritance by CNT using the new town precedent. The PRO’s view on urban regeneration records altered in the early 2000s as it came to appreciate the historical significance of this central government programme.

Opportunities

At the time, the 1994 re-organisation seemed to reverse CNT's records management progress. Nevertheless, the long-lasting "Records Liaison Officer" network emerged from it. Also, Biggs responded with "a positive exercise" to "hopefully form the basis for the way forward", by asking records officers to re-examine the "Three Year Plan", and revise work targets and arrangements along the lines of:

- "1. Legally required to do by the P.R.O.
 2. Local Office requirements for a records service.
 3. Establishing and maintaining the CORA computer system.
 4. Records section functions (eg. admin./management)
 5. Records jobs which would be done if resources available, but are not a priority in terms of meeting statutory requirements or a local service.
- Within that framework apply your new staff numbers to the jobs, indicating where they can be applied".²⁵

The announcement in January 1996 that Central, South and Headquarters records management was to be rationalised was generally considered to be a constructive development. Glen House Records had a poor reputation with key staff, and when the PRO IDO's annual report expressed concern, management instigated change.²⁶ Responsibility for Glen House records management was given to the Director of Personnel and Management Services (DPMS) who delegated routine management to the DRO and his staff at Milton Keynes. Most London records were there, and it made sense to re-focus resources by closing the Glen House section. This resulted in roll-out of systematised records management in London, with immediate introduction of registration for current files, CORA search facility and training for RLOs, and loan-tracking. By May 1996 Stacey Bushes staff "were receiving compliments and thanks from the Records Liaison Officers and other staff at Glen House..."²⁷

The 1998 restructuring was positive for records management. The DoE appointed consultants in 1996 to advise on arrangements for the post-1998 organisation.²⁸ Unlike in 1994, executive management decided to protect records management, reflective of the progress made by the function at Milton Keynes in winning key allies since 1994. Also the DRO had early and actively promoted post-1998 records issues in 1996. DPMS, and Director of Finance (who assumed records management responsibility from April 1998) gained Executive Management Group approval for the DRO's recommendations in January 1997, and work progressed thereafter.²⁹ This re-organisation provided the opportunity to promote and achieve the corporate centralisation lacking since 1992.

²⁵ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

²⁶ CNT Records: 30/1/1/3.

²⁷ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

²⁸ CNT Records: 30/1/24.

²⁹ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

8.2 PRIVATISATIONS and OUT-SOURCING

Motivation for Out-sourcing and Privatisation

CNT and predecessor corporations commonly used external resources such as the consultants who devised master plans. By 1971, Corby Development Corporation could not justify a full-time Architects' Department, and arranged that a nucleus of staff establish a private practice from 1972. In consequence, Architect's Department files were "frozen at that time".³⁰ In the 1980s the Government encouraged corporations to privatise in preparation for closure. For example, Telford Development Corporation legal work was largely out-sourced in 1987, with staff moving to Manby and Steward (for commercial and private housing developments, campus sites and rented housing transfer) and Martin-Kaye and Partners (for acquisitions, industrial areas and CRA packages).³¹ Agreements reduced establishments and direct costs whilst ensuring staff and work continuity. Commitments ended when corporations closed, and consultancies increasingly fought to obtain or retain CNT contracts.³² However, the concept of out-sourcing was established for the 1990s and beyond. CNT increasingly used consultancies from 1979. It resisted full implementation of compulsory competitive tendering processes because of its perceived limited lifespan, believing it could withstand external scrutiny by employing consultants to advise on operational and staffing matters. In 1988 Deloitte Haskins and Selles advised against expanding 'contractorisation'.³³

Extent of privatisation and use of consultants

Out-sourcing initially affected finance, legal, estates, planning and architecture, landscape, and engineering, but later increased. MKDC privatised much of its work and staff in 1987-89, to eleven "Business Ventures".³⁴ WRDC had seven privatisations.³⁵ In 1989 CNT's Chief Executive told the DoE that he was "disturbed to discover" that many WRDC records were with consultants and it was intended to retrieve these following dissolution.³⁶ Consultants were often physically close to corporation and CNT premises, sometimes staying in the same building after privatisation as at Basildon and Warrington.³⁷ This convenience conversely raised issues about privatised staff operating as if corporation employees, such as concerns at Warrington about consultants' access to computer systems and potential misuse of data.³⁸

³⁰ Northamptonshire RO, "Corby Catalogue" vol 1, Architects Department, np.

³¹ CNT Glen House file: 11,285/3, "Telford Development Corporation Legal Work Consultancy", 1991-1992, consignment HQ 2337, EP Records Centre.

³² Any advantage arising from staff connections to corporations diminished over time as links lost currency, and as consultancies applied staff with no new town background.

³³ Ruffman, chapter 7, p3.

³⁴ CNT Records: 30/1/19, "Records – General and Policy – Consultants", 1992-1998, EP Records Centre.

³⁵ CNT Records: 30/3/3/2.

³⁶ CNT Records: 30/1/1/1.

³⁷ CNT Records: 30/4/21.

³⁸ CNT North Records: EST 1364.

CNT practice was to maintain continuity initially by retaining or renewing corporation arrangements. This approach continued for UDC transfers in 1998. CNT also used consultants for self-generated work. For example, IT support services were out-sourced through the 1990s with one in-house manager. CNT considered large-scale out-sourcing for the 1998 reorganisation, but ultimately the Audit function alone was out-sourced. Lack of administrative support meant that the retained contract manager recognised his need “to get up to scratch on keeping records and filing” and asked Records to devise a new filing theme.³⁹ Following the URA merger, a large in-house IT department was developed, and in-house auditors re-established.

Problems arising from lack of controls

Whilst scoping records issues from 1988, Field and Moon identified “inefficient and sloppy” systems for using consultants. It was unknown what records consultants held, or where. There was confusion over ownership, and no reviewing. Difficulties created by privatisation and out-sourcing were generic.⁴⁰ The issues prominent in the research data are as follows:

Confusion over status and ownership

CNT’s 1988 meeting with the PRO noted that as all corporations had dates set for dissolution they would be increasingly off-loading functions to private firms on contract. It was incorrectly deemed that the records of these firms would not be public records, although CNT should seek to secure access to them, and that records of corporations for review and disposal would therefore become limited in type and diminish in number. Moon recommended compilation of a central record of files held by CNT’s consultants, despite her understanding “that these files are legally the property of those consultants”.⁴¹ However, at MKDC the records created by private companies on behalf of the corporation were deemed to belong to MKDC and were sent to its records centre, passing to CNT as public records. CNT and the PRO adopted this view by 1992.⁴²

Confusion occurred during the merger of CNT Basildon Office’s engineering department in 1988 with Scott Wilson Kirkpatrick (SWK). The Privatisation Agreement stated that records were CNT property and should be offered to CNT at the end of the consultancy term or end of job whichever came first. Anything not accepted by CNT within three months of the offer would “become the absolute property of the Engineers and may be destroyed by them”. This statement conflicted with public records status, and the 3(6) transfer procedure.⁴³

³⁹ CNT Records: 30/3/1/5.

⁴⁰ It was held that widespread contracting out in the railway sector in the 1990s threatened a loss of control and ultimately the business. Julie Mathias and Nikki Bosworth, “ ‘Records Management and Organisational Change’ St William’s College, York, 11 February”, *Society of Archivists, The Newsletter*, no 120, May 1999, pp20-22.

⁴¹ CNT Records: 30/1/1/1.

⁴² CNT Records: 30/1/3/1.

⁴³ CNT Records: 30/1/19.

Disputes could arise from lack of clear agreement when any partnership or joint working was entered into. The Northampton Borough Solicitor also acted as solicitor to Northampton's corporation, and subsequently performed consultancy work for CNT. In 1991 he refused to return legal files "for the time being" on the contradictory grounds that although the majority were "dead" and he did not wish to retain unnecessarily, he could not provide a service without them immediately to hand. As of 2006 and with no service agreement in place, they had not been returned.⁴⁴

Records taken at privatisation

Field observed in 1991: "problems arise with the increasing use of consultants as to how much of the Development Corporation's record material should be held by those consultants when employed by Development Corporations."⁴⁵ In 1990, Hilary Saw, PRO's IDO for CNT, was concerned that privatisation could result in loss of documents with legal force, wondered whether provision of copies to consultants would suffice, and recommended the condition of records held by consultants be checked.⁴⁶ Despite this, significant numbers of records were considered missing by 1992. At Washington in 1990-91 it was widely believed that a former corporation architect had taken records to his new employers, the technical services consultants.⁴⁷ Some managers were unconcerned about file retrieval, and thought it created storage problems. This ignored statutory responsibilities for public records, created an organisational knowledge gap, and meant that some records escaped comprehensive review and disposal.

Records creation and filing

Records created by consultants were largely unmanaged by the client. In-house managers for out-sourced disciplines monitored contracts at strategic and financial levels, but ignored daily record-keeping. CNT Records could not control current files in independent, private sector companies. Even if a system had been agreed, Records had insufficient resources to monitor compliance at so many companies and sites.

Consultancy record-keeping resulted in duplication of case files. Where new town physical filing registries existed, and the consultant returned files, registry clerks might merge files, but there was no easy way to implement or maintain consistent organisation-wide procedures.⁴⁸ Without registration, the client did not control file creation. CNT's Records Policy Document stated that departments should ensure that consultants provide updated lists of files, but there was no penalty or management concern for non-compliance. Consultancy filing could be poor, and CNT imposed no standards. In 1991 Peter Lane complained of "the mess that constitutes the papers

⁴⁴ CNT Records: 30/1/19.

⁴⁵ CNT Records: 30/1/6.

⁴⁶ CNT Records: 30/1/3/1.

⁴⁷ CNT Records: 30/4/21.

⁴⁸ CNT Records: 30/1/1/3.

under the control of” Washington’s planning consultant. The Executive Officer had “issued written instructions for improvement and provided registry assistance to sort them” but the “situation has reverted to what it was”. Lane felt if this was ignored before closure, CNT “could suffer detriment” and suggested the “inheritor of these papers” at Warrington needed to spend a week at Washington “to put matters in order before he faces the mass of unsorted, jumbled and disarticulated papers without being able to call on the help of” the consultants.⁴⁹

Policy stated records should return from consultants when a project, or the consultancy itself, ended, although this relied upon departmental staff and/or the consultant for instigation. There could be confusion over whether consultants had transferred files. In 1995 ex-WRDC consultant architects wanted to borrow files which they said were given to CNT in 1991, but they could not be located, and CNT had no record of receipt.⁵⁰ With records successfully received, the recipient inherited files the format and content of which they had not controlled. This hindered review and disposal.

Loaned Records

Consultants periodically requested access to records, raising security questions as to whether this was for the contract, or for other purposes. It was difficult to monitor loans, and even registries could lose track in times of change. Generally, records movements to and from consultants, were not well recorded. In 1990 Lane discovered that over two hundred files at Washington Office had been on loan for up to three years, with uncertainty as to where most were. Lane suggested recalling every file, followed by searches of consultant and CNT offices. In 1991 he reiterated that files had “vanished” and needed “flushing out”, with a requirement for consultants to produce up-to-date lists, so that files could be marked for transfer to Warrington.⁵¹

When CNT succeeded corporations, retained consultants might change behaviour. In 1992 the former MKDC legal consultant began adding papers to closed files borrowed from the records centre.⁵² The local Legal Officer asked the consultant to desist from transferring files unless the matter was closed. When problems continued, Records refused to accept affected files. Consultants were invited to tour the records centre to understand procedures, but staff turnover within consultancies necessitated frequent repetition of instructions.⁵³

Difficulty in retrieval

The above issues contributed to general difficulty in retrieval from consultancies of records taken at privatisation, subsequently borrowed, or created on behalf of the client. If a consultant co-operated, matters were generally fine, although there was no guarantee all files returned. In 1993

⁴⁹ CNT Records: 30/4/21.

⁵⁰ CNT Records: 30/3/3/2.

⁵¹ CNT Records: 30/4/21.

⁵² CNT Records: 30/2/2/1.

⁵³ CNT Records file: 30/3/6/1, “Records – Departmental – Consultants – Denton Hall”, 1992-1998, EP Records Centre.

the ending of the Milton Keynes estates management contract resulted in seven lateral filing cabinets returning to be sorted into over four hundred closed files for storage, and the remainder merged with 'live' registry files.⁵⁴

Retrieval from former consultants with no current ties to the client, and possible discontent over a lost contract, was potentially harder. Lane and Washington's Executive Officer attempted to retrieve documents from the former corporation's legal consultants Wheldon Houlby and Scott (WHS) in 1990, as CNT needed "to know precisely what commitments [sic] it has inherited for payment of fees & expenses surrounding the sale" of the town centre. It proved difficult to gain co-operation by either CNT or the new consultants (Byron Hartley and Penrose (BHP)). WHS finally returned thirteen boxes of files and papers – "fortunately all listed" – although CNT could not be sure that everything was included.⁵⁵ In 1992 the Milton Keynes Records Officer tried to recover files taken or created by MKDC business ventures, or obtain lists of files they needed as retained consultants for CNT.⁵⁶ One replied that it had never been asked by MKDC to return files, although the Records Officer produced evidence that it had. Another had shredded a number of files borrowed in 1987. A need for storage space could as easily prompt destruction as return, whatever legal agreements were made. Some files retained for CNT's ongoing work were never returned. Even proactive chasing by a records manager could not *ensure* retrieval in the absence of management interest in compliance and penalty.⁵⁷

Change in Consultancies

A significant problem was posed by contracts moving between consultants over time, risking loss of records. There was no control or audit of what records were returned to the client or passed directly from old to new consultants. CNT entered into three new engineering contracts in 1992, which severed association with Basildon staff privatised to Scott Wilson Kirkpatrick (SWK) in 1988. The memorandum regarding the change arrangements omitted mention of records.⁵⁸ At the RMM in 1995, "Comment was passed on the loss of records when consultancies were passed around, as between SWK and Frank Graham. In reply to a question, DPMS said that EMG was perhaps not as conscious of this issue as it was when the corporate directors had existed." This tacitly admitted the difficulties arising from dissipating corporate overview and central control.

At the other extreme, when consultants lost contracts, Records staff faced sudden arrival of voluminous records. In 1994 it was reported that the Warrington landscape consultants "off-loaded all CNT files" in ninety boxes to North Records. An example of consultants retaining records and CNT failing to investigate or pursue CNT property, occurred when Rendel Hi-point

⁵⁴ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

⁵⁵ CNT Records: 30/4/21.

⁵⁶ CNT Records: 30/1/1/3.

⁵⁷ CNT Records files: 30/3/6/1-12, "Records – Departmental – Consultants" (first 12 sub-files relate to former MKDC consultants – listed in Bibliography), 1992-1998, EP Records Centre.

⁵⁸ CNT Records: 30/1/19.

vacated New Town House in 1995 leaving behind 110 boxes of records and fifty bundles of negatives, all unlisted and in poor condition.⁵⁹

Risk of Consultancies foundering

Consultancies did not always thrive. Milton Keynes Marketing Ltd (MKM) was launched in 1992 to continue MKDC's promotion of the town, as a partnership between CNT, local authorities and others, with promise of DoE funding.⁶⁰ When funding was not forthcoming from the borough, the DoE withdrew support, forcing closure in 1994. CNT undertook to cover promotion, taking many MKM staff into its Corporate Services marketing team that became a new Marketing Directorate. In records terms the closure proved reasonable as MKM was located within CNT's Milton Keynes Office and the records MKM had taken from MKDC returned with transferring staff. However, if this had not been the case, there was nothing in place to deal with problems.⁶¹ There was also the issue that MKM's records remained with the former company secretary on transfer to CNT – and creating uncertainty as to status. A similar issue occurred after 1999 when EP staff acted as company secretaries or directors of partner bodies such as urban regeneration companies (URCs). This highlighted lack of consideration for records arrangements by Government in creating bodies with multiple partners.

Problems of review, archival selection and preservation

Apart from business risks, use of consultants posed risks for archival selection and compliance with public records procedures. Hilary Moon was aware in 1989 of the general concern of the Society of Archivists that use of consultants could mean no technical records whatsoever passing to local record offices.⁶² Consultants were less available to assist review decisions than internal staff, and might want payment. Peter Lane could not get BHP to find time to review 3000-4000 legal files in 1990. He estimated it would take them two full days, but him alone much longer and with uncertainty that he had “not missed something for lack of the necessary background knowledge”.⁶³

Lack of liaison with Records Management

Central co-ordination which might have alleviated such problems was absent. An appropriate channel was offered by formal records management, but it was difficult to achieve recognition. Records was unsure of its position where an agreement or records clause was not in place and in 1992 Biggs considered it “would be helpful if Records was informed of what was being said or agreed by C.N.T. officers at M.K. or H.Q. concerning records.”⁶⁴ In 1993 he emphasised at the RMM “the importance of control over records with consultants and departmental staff.”⁶⁵ It did

⁵⁹ CNT Records: 30/1/1/3.

⁶⁰ CNT Records: 30/3/1/2.

⁶¹ CNT Records: 30/3/1/4.

⁶² CNT Records: 30/1/1/1.

⁶³ CNT Records: 30/4/21.

⁶⁴ CNT Records: 30/1/19.

⁶⁵ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

not improve, for in 1996 Milton Keynes engineering consultants “had been destroying records at the behest of an unidentified C.N.T. source and in contravention of C.N.T. Records Policy!”⁶⁶ Such casual records relationships with consultants were normal, and if Records staff were not involved, there was no central record kept, and no public record compliance. For example, in 1993 the Glen House Principal Legal Officer, when approached by a consultant trying to rationalise “well in excess of 20,000 stored files from former clients”, made retrieval and disposal decisions without reference to Records.⁶⁷

Attempts to control

Problems regarding consultancies highlighted by Field and Moon in the 1980s were intermittently raised thereafter. The RMM stated in 1994 that turnaround in consultancies required vigorous pursuit of old files from outgoing firms and insertion of robust procedures and contractual clauses in terms of incoming consultancies.⁶⁸

In 1994 it was thought possible that CNT’s Land Agency and Marketing Directorate would split from the 1998 Agency, ahead of the 1998 closure, in expectation of a lifespan beyond CNT. The RMM felt that in “any privatisation, the records must remain with the care body, and only copies to be taken by the new agencies”. DPMS said that in the event of privatisation the DoE would be involved and aware of the need to address ownership of records. However, CNT did not split or close.⁶⁹ Although Records staff could raise issues and state principles, in practice it was difficult to exercise control. The case study shows that, although not watertight, the best approach was to include records clauses in contracts, and from that basis implement control procedures.

Without contractual clauses it was more difficult to retrieve records, even where their existence was known and their return desired. MKDC was well-organised in inserting clauses on records into its agreements with most, but not all, of the business ventures in 1987-89.⁷⁰ In 1987 the issue of records access by business ventures exercised MKDC’s Archivist. He felt “as a matter of principle” there should be no access without permission from designated “core staff”, and an authorised signatory procedure was introduced.⁷¹ In 1988 Moon noted there “appears to be an efficient system of dealing with records used by consultants” at MKDC. She and Field included a section on consultancies in the 1988 RPD Supplement. A 1990 paper, “Arrangements With Consultants: Records”, recommended a formal approach to consultants regarding storage, listing, movement and inspection of records, consideration of attaching specific records instructions to

⁶⁶ CNT Records file: 30/3/6/4, “Records – Departmental – Consultants – Pell Frischmann”, 1992-1998, EP Records Centre.

⁶⁷ Peterborough DC/CNT: 12007.

⁶⁸ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

⁶⁹ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

⁷⁰ See sub-files under CNT Records file: 30/3/6, “Records – Departmental – Consultants”.

⁷¹ CNT Records file: 30/2/2/1; CNT Records: 30/3/2/22, “Records – Departmental – Central (Milton Keynes) – Legal”, 1992-1998, EP Records Centre.

legal agreements, and making preparations prior to CNT taking over corporations.⁷² A Records Meeting in 1991 discussed standardisation of procedures for moving records to and from consultants.⁷³ In 1992 the Records Working Party on Automation stated that files should not be given unrecorded to external organisations.⁷⁴

However, no directive to establish a corporate system was forthcoming by 1992. A dichotomy existed between the RPD and Glen House practice as “in most cases the Records Section is not even informed of file loans to consultants. Elsewhere it is laid down that the Records Section shall list and be responsible for the transfer of records to Consultants, but this has yet to be actioned.” It was recommended that Records be made “officially responsible for the loan of records to consultants for whatever purpose”, and that clauses as per the MKDC model be inserted into agreements, with consultants acknowledging receipt of documents to avoid argument.⁷⁵ Management still failed to issue instructions, but gave mixed messages. When Biggs reported that the new Milton Keynes Marketing promotional agency was retrieving former MKDC Commerce Directorate files, but not depositing, the Head of Corporate Services was anxious that “a) proper procedures are adopted and b) any resource implications are recharged to the organisation.” Yet, there was no reply to Biggs’ enquiry about CNT clauses with consultants for the new Milton Keynes Office in 1992.⁷⁶

The formal Records function incorporated preferred procedure into records policy and guidance through the 1990s and beyond. Policy was approved but unenforced by management, so in practice it remained inconsistent as to whether consultancy agreements specified records, and whether records borrowed or created by consultants were listed or returned.

8.3 ACQUISITIONS AND MERGERS

As a residuary body, CNT acquired workload, staff, premises, records and other assets from over thirty other bodies in the course of this case study.⁷⁷ The driver was not business expansion, but Government direction. The case study demonstrates the consequences of merger for records management. The effects could last several years, and without co-ordinated records management, inconsistencies and poor practice resulted.

The experience of northern new towns illustrates issues both of acquisition and merger. Warrington Development Corporation’s central registry had disintegrated soon after Warrington and Runcorn Development Corporation (WRDC) was created in 1981. Some departments continued registry systems. Departmental systems had co-existed, such as in the Estates

⁷² CNT Records: 30/1/1/1.

⁷³ CNT Records: 30/1/19.

⁷⁴ CNT Records: 30/1/2/3.

⁷⁵ CNT Records: 30/1/19.

⁷⁶ CNT Records: 30/1/19.

⁷⁷ Issues linked to closure are covered primarily in section 8.5, Closures.

Department, and individuals kept 'working' files, the contents of which were not necessarily also on official files. This situation was further complicated after WRDC's extensive privatisation, with ex-staff remaining within New Town House. Former staff, Dove and Hodd legal consultants, managed the deeds. Consultant engineers, Rendal Palmer and Tritton, maintained files for the architects, engineers, planners and landscape departments, arranging them geographically into subject areas.

The Runcorn Development Corporation central registry ran from 1966 until Runcorn's functions passed to WRDC. In 1983, legal, engineers, architects and finance departments (and files) moved to Warrington. Their old files were variously destroyed, moved to Warrington's Howley Wharf closed store, or kept in WRDC's Runcorn Office basement where, because Runcorn's registry staff had taken redundancy, files were managed by the receptionists. Through 1985 to 1988 movement of files to the dominant Warrington Office continued, with some estates and technical files being merged into Warrington's Estates Registry and file numbers changed, without notification to the staff filing at Runcorn Office who continued the Runcorn Development Corporation theme '15' Estates Management. After the majority of Runcorn industrial properties were sold in 1987-89, remaining files were stored at Warrington. In 1989 rented housing was transferred to a housing association alongside housing files and all the sold property files. In 1990, when Runcorn estates files moved to Warrington, the duplication with Warrington files which had developed over seven years was discovered.⁷⁸

When CNT took over in 1989, it considered WRDC records to have been poorly maintained. It moved the Librarian from Skelmersdale Office to assist records matters, and then gradually introduced clerks and temporary staffing for current filing and sorting closed records. This ad hoc approach reflected inexperience and resource limitations, but was normal before CNT's formal records management existed. It meant that problems accrued because they were not addressed appropriately from the outset. Problems at CNT Warrington-Runcorn Office included lack of knowledge of records, volume of disorganised records, files in poor repair, no booking-out system, outdated indices, backlog filing, "no true record" of records taken in the "hasty departure" of consultancies from New Town House. Some records were deposited in Cheshire Record Office, but many closed records remained untouched.⁷⁹

Within two years Warrington-Runcorn became the Northern Office, through several office closures. A working party co-ordinated records centralisation. Using available staff, Field and Moon established a section for the new office from April 1991 of a Records Officer, Records Assistant and three Registry Clerks. Initial challenges encountered included no consultation about storage provision in the new office layout, packing, relocating and unpacking the same records three times in twelve months due to office moves, closing and merging files for new

⁷⁸ CNT Records: 30/3/3/2.

⁷⁹ CNT Records: 30/1/1/1; 30/3/3/2.

arrangements, and dealing with duplication. New deposits were uncontrolled and disorderly. Some records centralised at Warrington in 1991-92 resulted from earlier corporation mergers (Warrington and Runcorn, and Aycliffe and Peterlee). The north east posed particular issues for staff only familiar with the north west, as some Aycliffe and Peterlee records had been mixed into CNT Washington's system from 1988, whilst other records were deposited at Durham Record Office and TWAS, stored in BDM, or sent to Glen House. Many different filing systems – inherited and newly-created – were maintained in parallel in Records and departments.

Developments at Warrington exemplify reactive and non-strategic records management, dictated by decisions from management and departments. The result was that by 1992 North Office Records identified major issues as: understanding and managing different inherited systems, merging and closing records before review, setting up new systems, lack of local knowledge, decentralised systems, and lack of computerisation.⁸⁰ A professional records management approach might have taken a more strategic view at the outset and created a new, unified, system, with inherited ones for reference-only, creating less complexity and workload for the section, and for CNT's centralised function after 1998.

The formal CNT records management function itself experienced merger when CNT combined with URA in 1999. This revealed similar issues and experiences to those reported elsewhere by practitioners.⁸¹ URA was smaller and younger than CNT, with less developed systems. However, the URA background of the new executive management affected which organisational procedures and systems were retained or abandoned. Only processes tied to CNT's status as a legal entity were not at risk in the short-term.⁸² This merger also demonstrated the issue of culture clash. Even organisations with similar remits have different histories and traditions, and possibly differing management styles and operating standards. This can occur within the same organisation at different sites, or between different departments in the same building, and so is magnified and deepened at organisation level.⁸³ Division can be difficult to bridge, particularly if

⁸⁰ CNT Records: 30/3/3/2.

⁸¹ The 1995 merger of the Department of Employment and the Department for Education, with issues of how to take forward two different records systems and practices, was discussed at a PRO conference. Collin Crooks, "Oil and water: the marriage of two departments", presentation by Collin Crooks, DRO, Department for Education and Employment, at the Public Record Office Conference of Departmental Record Officers, Manchester, 9 October 1996 – Author's Notes. Mergers between organisations also formed a topical theme for a Records Management Society conference, with case studies provided on the merger of Guinness and Grand Met in 1997 as Diageo, and of Zeneca Pharmaceuticals and Astra Merck in 1999 as AstraZeneca. Records Management Society Annual Conference, 2000 - Author's Notes.

⁸² Two separate legal entities, under one management with one public face and harmonised operations, also occurred when the PRO and HMC joined as The National Archives (TNA) in 2003. This was publicised as being achieved with relative ease and speed, through planning, and building on common factors, such as "working for the goal of making archives better". Steven Jones, "The Honeymoon is Over" Bringing together the HMC and the PRO", *Places of Deposit Bulletin*, November 2003, pp8-10.

⁸³ In the AstraZeneca merger, an international cultural difference caused disagreement on records retention issues. RMS conference 2000 - Author's Notes.

management is slow to share information and weld organisations into one. Contact between CNT and URA staff beneath senior management remained minimal twelve months after merger.

Where one body in a merger has formal records management the opportunity exists to introduce it into the other and look at centralisation and cost savings.⁸⁴ In the CNT/URA case, URA had no organised records management, but CNT staff faced the hurdle of justifying why there should be records management at all. URA was not a public record body and the DRO raised with CNT management the need for records issues to be resolved early in the merger. However, CNT management was not in control. The Records establishment survived to roll-out records management into the harmonised organisation, but without additional resources.⁸⁵

8.4 TRANSFERS OF FUNCTIONS AND ASSETS

“DROs must ensure that, when functions are transferred to or from their departments, arrangements in respect of records relating to those functions are agreed with the DROs of other departments (or equivalent officers in bodies whose records are not public records) which are involved in the transfer, following the guidance from GSD...”⁸⁶

Transfers of functions and assets could be exceptional, and large-scale, such as moving housing functions from new town bodies after 1976, or result from routine business activity, such as adoption of highways by local authorities. The case study shows this activity was unconnected to overall records review and disposition until CNT formal records management processes in the 1990s linked it to section 3(6) disposal of records to another body, as an alternative to destruction.⁸⁷

Housing Transfers

Housing transfer was mostly completed before formal records management existed, and so records transfers were performed as an administrative task by departmental staff without records management co-ordination. In 1978, as an afterthought, CNT’s Chief Administrative Officer worried that grants of arms to corporations had been lost in the transfers.⁸⁸ That records transfers could be hit and miss, with neither party confident of contents, was proved when Welwyn Office was cleared for CNT’s 1982 centralisation. Staff found files relating to property transferred to the district council in 1978, and forwarded them in 1983 with permission to destroy if not required.⁸⁹

⁸⁴ As in the Diageo merger. RMS Conference 2000 - Author’s Notes.

⁸⁵ The experiences are outside of the timeframe of this thesis, but data continues and supports findings presented in this thesis.

⁸⁶ Public Record Office, “Manual”, section 2.1.9, np.

⁸⁷ See also Chapter 7.3, Disposition of Records.

⁸⁸ Hertfordshire RO: CNT HH Box 210 MISC 72.

⁸⁹ CNT Glen House: RE5(a).

A number of corporations, in the approach to transfer, used local authorities or housing associations as housing management agents. Staff, premises and records were transferred for the purpose, raising similar issues to out-sourcing and use of consultants. Such change became further complicated when disagreements led to reversal of arrangements, as between MKDC and Milton Keynes Borough Council.⁹⁰

At Corby Development Corporation, housing transfer resulted in “a considerable reduction in the Corporation’s size and functions” and prompted interest in review and disposal. The General Manager explained in 1977:

“As part of the re-organisation we plan to reduce the amount of ‘paper’ we have accumulated over the past twenty seven years, particularly old files and records which we will have no further need to consult.”⁹¹

Transfer of public records to a local authority

Co-ordination and accountability improved little after public record status was awarded, despite CNT’s infant records management function, because records transfers were still largely performed by departmental staff. This was demonstrated by disengagement from CNT Peterborough Office in 1989-91 when records were transferred to the city council without regard to public records status, and Les Field entrusted the local Legal Officer with “getting the Peterborough documents organised”. The officer’s correspondence with the council, laced with sarcasm about “this fascinating topic!” and “this exciting task”, suggests the inappropriateness of using non-Records staff.⁹²

Peterborough Council demanded transfer of planning records. CNT believed these had mostly been copied to the council before and since the corporation closed, and the council had “mislaid” them. CNT was also irritated that in practice the council was not keen to receive records, was “microfilming records once they are only 12 months old because of their space problem”, and referred external queries to CNT. Nevertheless, council planners claimed they lacked original authorisations for development which “hinders decision making”, and requested “in the interest of the future planning of Peterborough every effort is made to ensure all files relating to development sites are passed over.” The local Executive Officer agreed they could have remaining planning records. The transfer of 7(2) planning files highlights an inconsistency in CNT policy, as elsewhere they were retained and deposited with local archivists.⁹³ Field and Moon did not follow section 3(6) procedure for transfer of records to a third party as alternative to destruction, and this was matched by PRO inattention. Policy and procedures were lacking without professional, proactive and informed in-house records management.

⁹⁰ Milton Keynes Development Corporation, “Management Of MKDC Housing”, *The New Insider*, staff journal, no 47, 9 June 1988, p1.

⁹¹ Northamptonshire RO: Box File.

⁹² Peterborough DC/CNT: 12007.

⁹³ Peterborough DC/CNT: 12007.

Confusion about Status

Operational files transferred to other bodies could later be returned to CNT, resulting from lack of understanding of due processes in recipient bodies. In 1995, TWAS informed CNT that Sunderland Metropolitan District Council Engineers Department had deposited some Washington Development Corporation files that it had received in the 1980s. TWAS had selected some and was seeking CNT's permission to destroy the rest, or would add them to CNT's commercial storage costs. The DRO felt "that as these files were transferred by Washington Development Corporation to the Sunderland Metropolitan District Council, the C.N.T. is not the owner thereof, and should not be charged..." He suggested appropriate North Office staff examine them, copy anything of interest, and return them to TWAS for destruction, or arrange with TWAS and Sunderland for wanted files to be returned to ownership of CNT and storage at North Office.⁹⁴

It was discovered in 1997 that some Washington records intended for Sunderland Council had instead been deposited in TWAS, then loaned to the council without CNT permission. Biggs told departmental staff that he wanted to avoid asserting "ownership and access rights now, only for us to contact T.W.A.S. a short time later to say we are giving the records to Sunderland after all". It was suggested to TWAS that the records transferred to and from Sunderland be subject to 30 years closure and Privileged Access, but that no access request by Sunderland would be refused. Records already in the TWAS RMU would be considered for 3(6) as they arose on review reports. Biggs said: "The intention is to simplify matters, and all archival Washington records...will clearly belong to C.N.T. and its legal successors. No archival material should be left in, or deposited in future in the R.M.U."⁹⁵

Establishing a routine 3(6) process

The means to legislative compliance was for a formal records management function to implement and monitor procedures. The 3(6) application procedures were in place with the PRO from 1994, and awareness was promoted via the Records Policy Document and the "records liaison officer" network. Nevertheless, the system was hampered by slow PRO response times and the DRO's dependence until 1999 upon decentralised Records sections for management of regional transfers.⁹⁶

The 3(6) process was affected in 1997 by the PRO introducing the covenant: "A thirty year rule on access. The PRO must agree to any proposals by the recipient to dispose of all or part of the records in any way." CNT's DRO had understood since 1993 – and this was reaffirmed by his PIDO and IDO in 1997 – that 3(6) records ceased to be public records. The covenant seemed relevant to departments of state but unsuited to operational records which CNT frequently

⁹⁴ CNT Records: 30/1/21/13.

⁹⁵ CNT Records: 30/1/21/13.

⁹⁶ CNT Records files: 30/1/3/3/1-4, "Records – General and Policy – Public Record Office – 3(6) Submissions", (4 sub-files), 1992-1998, EP Records Centre.

transferred, and would be difficult for the PRO to monitor post-transfer. To CNT, the PRO seemed not to understand the business needs of a disposal agency.⁹⁷

8.5 CLOSURES

One journalist wrote in 1992:

“It was difficult not to feel a twinge of sympathy for the Milton Keynes Development Corporation last month as its officers cleared their desks, put their books and papers into packing cases, and decided which of the hundreds of potted plants to take with them.”⁹⁸

Such imagery promotes a view of individuals sorting records in a closure situation, rather than an organisational-level discipline of records management. Research shows common issues and experiences surrounding closure. The main emergent theme is hurried and unco-ordinated consideration of records, tempered only where records management – to varying degrees – was applied. Improvements emerged where formal records management existed in the receiving body, as with CNT and the UDCs in 1998, and was best where both closing and successor bodies had formal records management, as CNT found with LDDC and North Hull HAT. However, inconsistencies still emerged where the level or nature of records management was mismatched. Again, closing CNT offices benefited from formal records management, but were still limited through poor communication and resourcing.

Although closure of finite public sector bodies was expected, and, usually, departing staff were compensated, poor closure arrangements, or individual staff disenchantment, manifested itself in destruction or removal of records and finding aids, data deletion from computers, incomplete filing, misfiling, non-clearance of records from work areas, non-transfer of records to storage, or transfers without agreed procedures.

New Town Corporations

In 1962, Crawley and Hemel Hempstead closed without records management considerations, and so all surviving records passed to CNT. The same occurred in 1966 with Hatfield and Welwyn Garden City, except that awareness of records disposition existed because of the report prompted by Peter Walne. The four corporations that closed in 1980 and 1982 all made some effort through the 1970s to sort their records and preserve an historic legacy, but received limited guidance due to uncertainty about public record status.

Britain’s first new town, Stevenage, considered appointing an archivist in 1974, discussed joint arrangements with Harlow (which came to nought), and commissioned an archivist to report in

⁹⁷ CNT Records: 30/1/3/3.

⁹⁸ Stewart Dalby, “Successes on many fronts”, *Financial Times* Survey Milton Keynes, *Financial Times*, 3 April 1992, p25.

1976-77.⁹⁹ It settled for liaison with Hertfordshire Record Office regarding selection and disposal via its retired Chief Architect, Leslie Aked, from 1979 to closure. A number of records also transferred to Stevenage Museum and the Library Service. The main transfer to Hertfordshire took place before the corporation closed, with a subsequent transfer made from the CNT Office in 1981.

Harlow's Chief Solicitor made tentative arrangements with the county archivist by 1978 to deposit some legal records. However, only the announcement in 1978 of a wind-up date prompted concerted action by the nominated co-ordinator, Social Development Officer Rosemary Wellings. The corporation needed assistance to identify records for preservation or destruction. Options identified were to appoint jointly with Stevenage Development Corporation a full-time archivist, appoint a temporary suitably-qualified person, or second a qualified archivist from the county record office. The board agreed to consult the county archivist and Harlow Museum. Vic Gray, County Archivist of Essex, organised a survey, and reported his selection interests in 1979.¹⁰⁰ The corporation left CNT almost all its estates records, and other relevant records including a set of board records. Essex Record Office received the main archival material, including signed minutes and papers, with a closure period on files of ten years. Other records went to Harlow Library and the district council. The East Anglia Film Archive in Colchester received films because the record office could not emulate its service, although title to, and on-going distribution of, the film "Faces of Harlow" was offered to the council. This exemplifies the records dispersal that occurred at closure. Harlow seems organised, but there was no records management co-ordination of access, copyright, potential public record status requirements, within the corporation or from CNT.

Bracknell sought advice in 1979 from Stevenage, and benefited from a good Head Record Keeper who liaised with Berkshire Record Office and remained after transfer to CNT to sort records for the centralisation of the residual office into Glen House. However, the fundamental impact of different attitudes amongst archivists, and the risk of relying on archivists who did not respond as hoped, are demonstrated at Corby. The Development Corporation's General Manager, Hugh Hamilton, recalling that records of outgoing councils were "deposited in the County's Archives" following local government re-organisation in 1972, offered records to Northamptonshire Record Office in 1977 with a second envisaged deposit at closure. Hamilton thought that Corby's records, combined with those of Northampton and two expansion towns in the county, would provide "an exceptional and perhaps unique collection for the study of this country's post-war policy and practice relating to the New Towns and Expanded Towns movement."¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ The archivist was Mrs Eileen Wallace. Hertfordshire RO, CNT/ST, Stevenage Development Corporation file: "Minutes of Private Meetings March 1978-June 1979", 1978-1979.

¹⁰⁰ Essex Record Office office file: 6A 451, "Deposited Documents Harlow Development Corporation", 1966-1990, Essex Record Office.

¹⁰¹ Northamptonshire RO: Box File.

In contrast to the interest and assistance Harlow, Stevenage and Bracknell received from their record offices, Corby met perceived indifference and inaction, so no deposit occurred, and Corby records were left for CNT to sort. County Archivist Patrick King remained unenthusiastic in 1982 when Peter Lane, at CNT Corby Office, renewed contact, following the ACA/NTA report, as CNT was “looking towards its own eventual dissolution and wishes to place records it has inherited from its predecessor Development Corporation in safe keeping”. King replied that “our position with regard both the NDC and your records remains compromised by our shortage of staff needed to cope with existing backlog of work, and suitable records accommodation.” Little progress was made by 1985 when the record office noted that Lane was “anxious that the records should be removed from Corby as soon as possible; and that no records should be destroyed unnecessarily” and “Mr Lane is very keen that as much as possible be kept!” The passive role of the archivists continued, leaving it to Lane to “contact us to deliver loads bit by bit as he has labelled and checked them”. King also told Lane he had “no immediate storage problem (& that any difficulties I had made were political).”¹⁰²

The closures of 1962-82, showing matters left to individual organisations and county archivists, was understandable given lack of public record status for new town records, and that organised records management (beyond registries) was unusual. In 1985 all four corporations to close (Northampton, Redditch, Skelmersdale, and Central Lancashire) also liaised and deposited with county archivists, as did Basildon in 1986 (although it left a substantial volume of records for CNT). This situation differed to earlier because the ACA/NTA report had prompted liaison and CNT’s public record status was in place. However, CNT still had no organised records management, and was not held to account by the PRO. The Redditch Development Corporation Librarian/Archivist, Ken Small, learned in 1984 that CNT had a “minimal brief” to receive only records “enough to function”.¹⁰³ Closures still followed a pre-1982 pattern of matters being agreed between individual corporations and local archivists.

Northampton Development Corporation (NDC) particularly demonstrates delays in sorting records arising from consultations and conflicts of interest when a ‘partnership’ new town (with some staff working for both corporation and borough) closed. Records disposal was discussed from 1982, when the ACA/NTA report made it “necessary to sort out the question of NDC records with the County Archivist”, but momentum only gathered in the final months before closure, at the very time that NDC was “getting short of staff” to sort records.¹⁰⁴ Although the

¹⁰² Northamptonshire RO: Box File.

¹⁰³ Worcestershire RO, Acc 10300/792 (ii).

¹⁰⁴ The information on Northampton is taken from the following sources: CNT Records: 30/4/12; Northampton Development Corporation Board Minutes, 1983-1985, consignment NH337, EP Records Centre; Northampton Development Corporation Management Committee Minutes, 1982-1985, consignment NH 337, EP Records Centre; Northampton Development Corporation file: “Commission for the New Towns - Wind Up Arrangements NH”, 1985, consignment HQ 1492, EP Records Centre; Northampton Development Corporation file: “Transfer & Wind up – NBC/NDC Meetings”, 1983-1984, consignment HQ 1492, EP Records Centre; Northamptonshire RO: Box File.

General Manager stated “it was important to make sure that agreements about the location of documents etc. should be obtained in writing so that there was no subsequent uncertainty about them”, in 1985 the borough took or retained records which in other towns normally passed to CNT. This conflict was never resolved.

Records management and public record considerations were downplayed at Northampton because no records management staff were involved. After initial contact in 1983, the County Archivist did not participate until a few days before the corporation’s non-operational period ended in June 1985, after transfer to CNT, and too late to influence disposition. For example, the Corporation Secretary decided the fate of the General Manager’s “personal” files, although the archivists “might be allowed to see some of them”. The Secretary had co-ordinated records issues from 1983, assisted from 1984 by Hilary Moon. As she transferred to CNT she made arrangements for records in CNT’s new office and sorted transfer of ‘dead’ NDC files to storage at Corby. Despite liaison and administrative organisation in 1982-85, the unauthorised destruction, weeding and removal of records was revealed in 1986. CNT Northampton’s Executive Officer reported that personnel files had been “destroyed without reference to the Commission”, that “Certain Board papers were missing from the sets (believed destroyed) which were handed to the Commission”, and “It is believed that after demise the General Manager retained files which may need to be recorded under the [Public Records] Act. I have no details of either number or content.”¹⁰⁵ He recommended:

“In order to assist in the future with transferring records from the Development Corporations to the Commission, I would strongly recommend a system whereby the Commission has complete authority over the disposal and transfer of Development Corporation records prior to their wind-up. This would help enormously in the saving of staff time of sorting out problems and queries which always seem to arise long after the Development Corporation’s demise.”¹⁰⁶

When Aycliffe and Peterlee, Cwmbran, Washington and Peterborough closed in 1988, they had similarly addressed records matters via nominated staff and liaison with county archivists. However, this tranche of closures demonstrated increased discussion with CNT, because CNT’s records management function was developing. A policy document had been issued in 1987 and CNT sent consultant Peter Lane to investigate and report before the corporations closed. CNT and the PRO were more active in arrangements between corporations and archivists. This led to deposits, and sorting of records in successor CNT offices, but mostly the closed records bequeathed to CNT went into commercial storage. CNT’s records management remained relatively unco-ordinated, inexperienced, and part-time.

The closure of corporations through to 1988 shows the weakness of relying on voluntary application of the ACA/NTA guidance of 1982, rather than having formal records management in

¹⁰⁵ CNT Records: 30/4/12.

¹⁰⁶ CNT Records: 30/4/12.

place. Most corporations allocated individuals to co-ordinate records issues in consultation with local archivists. Review and disposal, archival selection, and transfers typically began no more than two years before an organisation's closure, and in practice actions usually occurred in the final stages of close-down. Inevitably, retention and destruction mistakes occurred, and scant records of the process undertaken were kept for the successor body. The approach slightly changed for Warrington and Runcorn's closure in 1989, as CNT placed an officer in WRDC offices before closure to address issues with corporation staff and the County Archivist of Cheshire. As workload grew after CNT inherited, more resources were applied until an official section emerged for North Office in 1991.

The situation differed again during the closures of Telford and Milton Keynes in 1991-92. Neither corporation made closure deposits with record offices, leaving their records for CNT. They both had collections of archival-selected material ready for deposit as both had operated records centres – TDC since 1984 and MKDC since 1985. Moon actually instructed that Milton Keynes records selected for preservation in Buckinghamshire were not to be deposited before CNT requirements had been assessed.¹⁰⁷ These highest-profile new towns presented CNT with large on-going workloads, and a corresponding need for easy access to information. Also, there was no imperative – certainly at Milton Keynes – to move records to county archives or BDM storage, as in-house storage was available.

With Milton Keynes, CNT inherited an operational, off-site records centre housing all MKDC closed records, and CNT kept MKDC's offices as its own, so the Commerce Registry remained intact as a basis for a new registry. The TDC in-house registry and records centre were lost with the disposal of the corporation office, but CNT gathered together closed TDC records and records from the closing CNT Redditch Office into a replacement off-site store at Stafford Park, and created a registry within the new Telford Office. Although CNT inherited more organised records from these two bodies, and over a longer period of time, than with previous corporations, the experience was still not ideal. Telford's records management arrangements were held to have deteriorated in the three years since the last professional Archivist left. At Milton Keynes, despite the archivists' requests to departmental staff to consign records in good time before closure, the records centre was inundated with disorganised records in the final two days.

Inheritance of the Stacey Bushes Records Centre created no impetus in CNT for records disposal. MKDC had itself destroyed relatively little. Sufficient storage capacity enabled MKDC and CNT to store without disposal. Nevertheless, the inheritance from Telford and, especially, Milton Keynes, enhanced CNT's records management programme and resources. Milton Keynes became the basis for formal records management strategy from 1992.

¹⁰⁷ Author's Knowledge.

The data from the corporation closures suggests that dedicated records management units, in both corporations and CNT, would have assisted liaison, co-ordination and best practice. This finding is further supported by what happened with closures of CNT offices and UDCs/HATs.

CNT Offices

The first CNT premises to close were the London ring town offices in the centralisation of 1982. Although well-organised administratively, closure lacked fundamental records management. Deposits were made with county archivists through the administration officers at each site. The closures forced closed files into commercial storage, but without records management considerations beyond basic storage and retrieval. Insufficient thought was given to required levels of security or retrieval, meaning that problems – which soon arose – were not addressed. Arrangements made for current records at Glen House were soon overtaken by decentralisation, cannibalisation, and re-referencing of files.

At Northampton's closure in 1988, records considerations were managed by Moon and Lane. Administrative techniques were applied, involving listing and dispersing records to Glen House, Redditch Office, BDM and Northamptonshire Record Office, without thought for future implications from the dispersal of 'live' files.¹⁰⁸ The same pattern occurred with the several office closures in 1990-92. Field and Moon mainly delegated everyday arrangements to administrative co-ordinators on site. An ex-administrator, Lane, was used as a consultant at Washington. The co-ordinators liaised with county archivists and managed disposals and transfers with departmental staff. The records working party for creation of North Office relied on administrative officers at each of the sites being closed. Thus, in 1988-92, CNT's infant records management function continued past approaches to closure situations. The Glen House Records Unit of 1989 was not established as, or developed into, a central, organisation-wide point of proactive records management. That would have been ideal for closure of six offices in two years. Instead, it maintained a narrow focus on managing the BDM contract.

From 1992, this changed. The records management function became formalised, dedicated and organisation-wide, and increasingly professionalised. It was henceforth responsible for records arrangements in CNT office closures. The only anomaly was Basildon, which relied upon key departmental staff (the Administrative Officer in the main office to 1994, and then the RLO for the residual team to 1997) for high-level co-ordination, liaison and reporting. This was managed as well as the DRO felt possible without on-site Records staff, given the decentralised context. There were concerns for unrecorded movement of records to Glen House and whether disposals to other bodies were fully documented to allow 3(6) submissions to be made to the PRO. This reinforced the DRO's belief that organised records management, applied direct, was needed in closure situations for control and accountability. By the time Glen House closed in 1998, the sorting and transfer of closed records into storage and review in a dedicated, in-house, single

¹⁰⁸ CNT Records: 30/4/12.

records centre, was systematised through departmental RLOs with proactive instruction, and physical assistance from dedicated Records staff.

Records managers wanted to plan and organise closure processes. This was demonstrated in Records Management Meeting discussions throughout 1995, about CNT's expected closure in 1998 and successor arrangements.

"All agreed that all aspects of the Records function need to be addressed as soon as the Residuary Body is announced so that the Residuary Body organises its records function and responsibilities with full understanding and consideration of the situation and issues, and also so that CNT Records can plan for an orderly transfer."¹⁰⁹

UDCs and HATs

Transfer of UDCs and HATs from 1998 repeated earlier problems where no organised records management was present in the closing body.¹¹⁰ CNT's records management function communicated its requirements most effectively where records management was present in the closing body. London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC) and North Hull HAT employed a Records Manager and an Archivist respectively, (although not professionally-qualified). This presence did not necessarily mean that records management practice matched that of CNT, and a factor in this was that CNT management did not allow early contact. CNT's DRO was asked by the DoE's DRO to deal with North Hull's Archivist when appointed in 1996, but this was not permitted by CNT management until late 1998. In the meantime North Hull invested in boxes and labels that did not match CNT requirements.¹¹¹ Neither LDDC nor North Hull practitioners exercised life-cycle management, and the records management applied late in LDDC's existence focused on commercial storage for closed records.

Departmental co-ordinators used by other UDCs/HATs could prove receptive to CNT's records management recommendations. Tyne and Wear Development Corporation (TWDC) made a temporary appointment of a newly-qualified post-graduate from the University of Northumbria's records management course. Sophie Philipson assisted in TWDC offices, and withdrew TWDC records from Tyne and Wear Archives Service (TWAS) for review and disposal. Her contribution to orderly transfer was acknowledged by both TWDC and TWAS, and she subsequently obtained a position in CNT's centralised records management establishment.

¹⁰⁹ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

¹¹⁰ Information on the UDCs and HATs is drawn from CNT Records: 30/1/8/1-9, 30/1/22.

¹¹¹ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2; 30/1/22; North Hull HAT: CES/001/012.

8.6 ISSUES FOR ARCHIVAL SUCCESSOR BODIES¹¹²

In addition to the PRO, local authority repositories registered as places of deposit under the Public Records Act provided a safe and lasting home for preservation of historic new town records. They also offered, as with the metropolitan authority abolition experience at the GLC and the Tyne and Wear County Council, a means for multiple legal successor bodies to access records if necessary.¹¹³ However, archival repositories faced some of the same issues as residual bodies.¹¹⁴

Lack of Guidance and Policy

County archivists mostly acted independently towards new town bodies, throughout the case study period. No single authority issued guidance. Early contact, and selection and deposit arrangements, were left to individual initiatives, such as by Peter Walne of Hertfordshire in 1965. He involved the PRO and Francis Steer of Sussex. Patricia Gill of Sussex was involved from 1972. W A L Seaman of TWAS approached Washington in 1978. Not all archivists responded positively when approached by corporations, as with Northamptonshire and Corby in 1977. Vic Gray of Essex became involved in 1978 when Harlow approached him, and he widened the contact between new town bodies and record offices via the ACA/NTA initiative in 1980-82. This prompted co-ordination of archivists receiving, or likely to receive, new town records, compilation of archival selection criteria, and liaison between individual record offices and corporations. However, such high-level national co-ordination was unsustainable, and, without further joint working groups, matters reverted to local initiatives, personalities and circumstances. County archivists naturally still consulted one another. Cohesion came with CNT's public record status from 1984 and confirmation of its application to deposited corporation records in 1985. The dedicated records management function at CNT from 1992 dealt with record offices individually, but provided central co-ordination, and had a common thread in the Public Records Acts.

Relationship with closing bodies

Record offices lacked automatic authority and processes for securing selection and transfer of archives, especially when competing against successor bodies and local interests. They had to be proactive in liaison with closing bodies, and even when interests were established, still depended

¹¹² Unless otherwise specified, information for this section is drawn from: CNT Records files: 30/1/21/1-16 "Records - General and Policy - County Archivists" (16 sub-files), 1992-1998, EP Records Centre; CNT Records: 30/1/1/1.

¹¹³ Bruce Jackson, "Taking 'em apart: the dissolution of a metropolitan borough", presentation by Bruce Jackson, County Archivist of Lancashire, at the Public Record Office Conference of Departmental Record Officers, Manchester, 9 October 1996 – Author's Notes; Deborah Jenkins, "Mergers and Disaggregation: The London Experience, 1986-90", presentation by Dr Deborah Jenkins of Greater London Record Office, at the Society of Archivists Records Management Group Annual General Meeting, London, 3 November 1994 – Author's Notes; Interview: Jenkins – Author's Notes.

on powers of persuasion, and co-operation within the closing organisation. Some benefited from powerful champions. Central Lancashire Development Corporation's General Manager, Phelps, took personal direction of sorting closed records for Lancashire Record Office.¹¹⁵ More typical was the Redditch Librarian/Archivist's observation in 1984:

"I am aware that the County Archivist is not top of the pecking order but as I now have a broad view of what records exist and what will probably be required by our successors, I intend to invite Tony Wherry to study the remainder."¹¹⁶

Nor was it straightforward for local government archivists, with many other responsibilities, to, perhaps very quickly, understand complex central government organisations, appraise their records, and secure selection in the sensitive and changing environment of closure. One senior employee at Aycliffe and Peterlee corporations described their running as "management by lurch", and the resignation of chairman T Dan Smith¹¹⁷ in the John Poulson corruption scandal gave an additional complication in that some records had been removed or sealed.¹¹⁸

Relationship with successor bodies

The relationship between the repository and the new town body or its legal successor continued after deposit. Records of CNT and its inherited corporations were public records. CNT retained ownership for access and copyright permission issues, and made further deposits. When CNT succeeded corporations, it retained archival material that was needed for ongoing business. Hindley told Walne in 1966 that he was unlikely to have secured any Hemel Hempstead records in 1962 as CNT had "immediate necessity for access..."¹¹⁹ Repositories did not therefore receive complete single deposits of new town archives. Also, CNT produced its own records on projects initiated by corporations, which some archivists envisaged would go to the PRO. However, CNT's agreed policy with the PRO was for local deposit of continuation files of local interest. Archivists benefited from the presence of a professional records management function at CNT after 1992 that reviewed, selected and offered them archival material, and provided ongoing informed liaison regarding deposits. This minimised the risk of alternative disposal, and deposits were accompanied by computer listings, organisational histories and other contextual information.

¹¹⁴ See also Chapter 7.3 for disposition issues from the view of the creating or residual body, and the issue of local interest groups.

¹¹⁵ Central Lancashire Development Corporation/CNT file: 3/6/5, "C.L.N.T. Archives", 1982-1986, consignment 2067/36/5, EP Records Centre.

¹¹⁶ Worcestershire RO, Acc 10300/792 (ii).

¹¹⁷ T Dan Smith (1915-1993), Chairman, Aycliffe and Peterlee Development Corporations (1968-70). *Who Was Who*, 1991-1995, p513.

¹¹⁸ Interview: Gill – Author's Notes.

¹¹⁹ Brigadier Geoffrey B S Hindley (1902-1980), General Manager, Hemel Hempstead Development Corporation (1956-62), General Manager, CNT Hemel Hempstead Office (1962), General Manager, Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield Development Corporations (1962-66), General Manager, CNT Welwyn Hatfield Office (1966-67). *Who Was Who*, 1971-1980, p369; Hertfordshire RO, E8.

Resources

Local record offices commonly complained of insufficient resources.¹²⁰ Long-term planning in local government generally is affected by changing directions of different ruling groups at national and local level, and by funding. In this context, local authority archive services, echoing low prioritisation of records management in new town bodies, were not generally perceived by councillors or officers as a core-function, income-generator, or vote-winner, and themselves faced issues of identity-loss and potentially unfavourable positioning in organisational structures.¹²¹

In 1982, when asked to take Northampton Development Corporation (NDC) records, Northamptonshire's County Archivist replied:

“...it is a bit much to be expected to do all the work in connection with the transfer with the same professional staff as this office had in 1964.”¹²²

Local authority record offices are not obliged to receive records other than those of their own authorities – but usually do so, having from inception developed and promoted a role as the main repositories for the historic public and private records of their areas. With increasing holdings and constrained storage and staff, repositories had to decide whether to be reactive or proactive in collecting policies. They did not necessarily have resources for cataloguing or conservation. Where record offices simply took in new town records and shelved them – or even left them in original transfer boxes on storeroom floors for years, as witnessed by the author – problems accrued.

Funding

Record offices received no funding from Government or the PRO for holding new town public records. There was no legislative requirement for new town bodies to pay for storage or listing of historic records which, after all, they were either urged or required to deposit, and which archivists agreed to select and receive. This position may be set against the grant-giving by new town bodies for community and social development, combined with their desire to leave an historic record of achievements. In which case, there seemed justification for contributions to repositories fulfilling that aim. More immediately, funding could facilitate timely cataloguing of records, making them more readily accessible to the depositor or residual body.

In 1985 King of Northamptonshire told the PRO that at a meeting with NDC, Northampton Borough Council and CNT “the question was raised as to whether the expiring Corporation or the

¹²⁰ Interviews with county archivists - Author's Notes, *passim* (see Appendix III).

¹²¹ Anonymous, “Comment: Archives, heritage and leisure”, *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, vol 14, no 2, Autumn 1993, p109; Matthew Jones, “Archives and Museums – threat or opportunity?”, *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, vol 18, no 1, April 1997, pp27-35.

¹²² Northamptonshire RO: Box File.

Commission should pay something to the County Council towards providing shelf space for the records, though which were not specified".¹²³ Howard Austin of CNT expressed surprise to the NDC Secretary:

"...this had not happened with any of the other counties taking records from us (even though some have had to deal with a much larger volume than is likely at Northampton). However, I do know that in one or two cases we were able to help by making some surplus storage equipment available to them (particularly old plans chests). Could you offer to help in that way at Northampton?"¹²⁴

Record offices, short of space, equipment and staff appreciated help. In 1983-84 Durham Record Office appraised records for deposit, destruction, or retention, for the Aycliffe and Peterlee Development Corporations, and in return the corporations purchased and presented it with a copy of the 1881 census records for the pre-1974 county of Durham.¹²⁵ Central Lancashire Development Corporation funded a temporary cataloguer for one year at Lancashire Record Office in 1985-86, whilst Cwmbran Development Corporation – and later CNT – financed a cataloguer at Gwent Record Office in 1987-88. CNT also funded a cataloguer at Hereford and Worcester for Redditch records in 1988, the request made at the suggestion of CNT's consultant, Peter Lane. Cheshire received funding from WRDC for 1988-90, and "help in kind in boxing, shelving etc." continued from CNT.¹²⁶

From 1988, the new records management function at CNT recognised the issue, and in April 1990 CNT's Board noted a report on "The Indexation and Cataloguing of Public Records held by County Archivists" and minuted that:

"The accurate and comprehensive indexation of archive material inherited from development corporations was vital and where necessary this specialist work should be carried out by County Archivists and paid for by the Commission. The approach outlined in the Paper was endorsed."¹²⁷

Rachel Watson of Northamptonshire and Tony Wherry of Hereford and Worcester organised a meeting of county archivists in June 1990 to "try – if possible – to agree a common approach to the Commission, particularly about the level at which listing might be done and the financial implications".¹²⁸

A number of record offices took advantage of CNT funding in ensuing years, but within CNT the undertaking was soon forgotten as personnel and priorities changed. Record office requests were

¹²³ CNT Records: 30/4/12.

¹²⁴ CNT Records: 30/4/12.

¹²⁵ Peterlee Development Corporation file: "Reports of Director of Administration from 16/3/84 to August 1988, Peterlee", NT/Pe/1/4/57, Durham Record Office.

¹²⁶ Worcestershire Record Office office file: AMW453.02:149.9:4, "Redditch Development Corporation", 1981-98, Worcestershire Record Office.

¹²⁷ CNT Records: 30/3/1/3; CNT Glen House file: RE5(a), "Records Transferred to County Archivist HAT/WGC", 1982-1990, EP Records Centre.

¹²⁸ Worcestershire RO: AMW453.02:149.9:4.

received and considered individually through the 1990s without reference to earlier policy. Responses varied in the light of CNT's own resources and its wish to avoid setting precedents.¹²⁹ In 1996 the Records Management Meeting stated funding of record offices was "not favoured as much as C.N.T. gaining access to list its own records which should be cheaper and provides control", but this was not a priority and would await "appropriate resources/opportunities".¹³⁰ David Biggs unsuccessfully suggested to North Hull HAT in 1998 that it might consider funding Hull City Archives "to specifically ensure H.A.T. archival collections are stored and catalogued once deposited."¹³¹ Greater Manchester Record Office attempted to charge CNT in 1997 for storage of Trafford Park Development Corporation records that it had selected direct from the UDC's premises. CNT had to enlist the PRO to reinforce that repositories could not charge for deposited archives.¹³² Reliance on 'charity' from depositing bodies will only change with national records legislation and the opportunity to standardise practice across repositories.

Common standards

Distribution of new town archives of local and regional interest to different record offices, meant that they were stored, catalogued and accessed according to different record office practices. CNT supplied no common policy or instruction for those deposited before 1992. A 'virtual archive', reconstructed through finding aids, was not entirely possible where collections remained uncatalogued. The only central point of knowledge of which records were stored in which repository, and when, was CNT's centralised records management function, and the DRO compiled information over time from 1993, as records of deposits from corporations and local offices had not always been passed to, or survived at, Glen House. When, given EP's finite nature, the CNT/EP records management function ends, unless such information is preserved with a successor body or the PRO, (and this assumes interest by the intended recipient in what could be regarded by some as simply working documentation), this metadata itself risks loss. Preservation, or reconstruction, of this useful finding aid to a dispersed archive, may present a worthwhile project, both from a records viewpoint and as a resource for scholars.

Cataloguing

New town record collections, often large, and disorganised, and subject to organisational change, posed difficulties for archivists in understanding the records received. Some record offices catalogued new town deposits quickly after receipt, without expectation or request for financial assistance, for example Hertfordshire in 1983. In contrast, a minority of record offices did not, citing backlogs and under-resourcing, and considered public records were not a priority if closed for thirty years. If the depositor wanted a catalogue earlier it should fund it. Thus, NDC records remained uncatalogued at Northamptonshire from 1985 to date, even when older records had reached 30 years, or Freedom of Information took effect. Record offices taking this stance

¹²⁹ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

¹³⁰ CNT Records: 30/1/1/2.

¹³¹ North Hull HAT: CES/001/012.

¹³² CNT Records: 30/1/8/8.

initially benefited from the fact that records were modern, with few access requests by historians. However, passage of time, and departure of staff involved with the deposits, exacerbated the low level of understanding within the record offices of unsorted collections. Also, duplicates, and records, which, with more care, would not have been taken, remained unidentified, and unnecessarily stored.

CNT/EP Records staff considered access to deposits was hindered by lack of catalogues, and that they would assist future review by indicating previous selections. In 1989 a CNT Board paper stated that on dissolution of some corporations “some records were catalogued and passed to county Archivists for approved deposit” but “this is not universally the case” and CNT “inherited a mass of material which was not suitably catalogued” and “material which had been passed to County Archivists was not sufficiently identified”.¹³³

Access

Peter Walne discussed closure periods with CNT after receiving records from closed Hertfordshire offices in 1983. He suggested they fall in line with public records, which would cover closure periods agreed with Stevenage Development Corporation.¹³⁴ CNT agreed and asked the three other affected county archivists “whether this would be acceptable for the Commission/Corporation records in your care”. They all agreed, although Gray at Essex noted that Harlow Development Corporation had stipulated ten years and he preferred “as short a closure period as possible”, and he sought clarification of whether Harlow should henceforward be considered as on deposit from CNT. Adam Green, County Archivist of Berkshire, requested authority to exercise discretion when officers of local authorities with inherited corporation functions or assets sought access, rather than refer to CNT.¹³⁵

Individual arrangements for closure periods and access had occurred with corporations because public record status was unresolved and central co-ordination was absent. Even after status was established, county archivists and corporation/CNT staff acted independently in the absence of a defined and well-understood deposit and access regime, which could have been provided by formalised records management. For example, in 1988 the County Archivist of Northamptonshire wrote to the Executive Officer of CNT’s closing Northampton Office, confirming that he would “be allowed access to and will be able to temporarily withdraw any personnel record relating to himself.”¹³⁶ A personnel record belongs to the employer, and access requests to deposited records under thirty years old would properly be directed to official CNT channels.

¹³³ CNT Records: 30/3/1/3.

¹³⁴ Hertfordshire RO: E8/4.

¹³⁵ CNT Glen House: N22/2.

¹³⁶ Northamptonshire RO: Box File.

Storage Space and Conditions

Repositories' ability to receive records did not necessarily neatly coincide with disposal by closing bodies. In 1984 Hereford and Worcester advised that it might not be able to take remaining Redditch records, and in 1990 Cambridgeshire would not take Peterborough records until an office extension was completed.¹³⁷ Buckinghamshire Record Office hoped its relationship with MKDC in the 1980s would facilitate a branch office in Milton Keynes to hold MKDC and other local archives, as its accommodation was limited.¹³⁸

In 1991 the County Archivist of Hertfordshire, Kate Thompson, approached CNT for financial assistance for boxing, revealing that records were "for the most part kept loose on shelves, which is not conducive to the permanent preservation of these important archives. They are difficult to keep clean, they are more than liable to atmospheric damage than records stored in boxes and as they are unsupported they are obviously liable to physical damage."¹³⁹

De-Accessioning

By the late 1990s, lack of storage space in record offices prompted discussion of records de-accessioning. Worcestershire and Northamptonshire both sought David Biggs's views regarding new town records taken in haste, and bulk, without careful appraisal.¹⁴⁰ Tony Wherry of Worcestershire felt that caution, with the assumption that they "can always get rid of it in the future", was probably the common motivation for repositories taking records as they had. Whilst not cost-effective to take and store records for later appraisal, practicality took precedence.¹⁴¹

Archivists were often unable or reluctant to determine historic value of modern records at point of transfer. The ACA/NTA's broad guidelines of 1982 were, in practice, insufficient for voluminous records, often disorganised, that did not fit neat criteria. Selections were hurried and subjective, and some archivists assumed they would dispose of some records later. Unsuitable records were therefore stored in archival repositories, particularly in uncatalogued collections. A pragmatic approach of review and disposal of material that should not have been accessioned, conflicted with a purist view, expressed by some PRO officers, that once deposited, public records could not be de-accessioned or destroyed without the Lord Chancellor's approval.¹⁴² This procedure was not designed to protect such material. Such records would not have survived, and this problem could not have arisen, if systematised records management had been in place in the transferring bodies and if the records aspects of closures had been better organised by both new town bodies and local archivists.

¹³⁷ Worcestershire RO, Acc 10300/792 (ii); CNT Records: 30/1/1/1.

¹³⁸ Milton Keynes Development Corporation file: 10/12/160, "Land and Property – Resale of Property – Co-ordination of Sites To Bucks County Council", 1981-1988, consignment 901/28/9, EP Records Centre.

¹³⁹ Hertfordshire RO: E8/4.

¹⁴⁰ CNT Records: 30/3/5/3.

¹⁴¹ Interview: 30 April, 2002, Tony Wherry, County Archivist of Worcestershire – Author's Notes.

8.7 SUMMARY

The various manifestations of change have common effects on records and records management. The case study demonstrates the difficulties of keeping control of, and preventing loss of, information and records in changing situations. This threatens business processes, accountability and compliance, and creates long-term issues and implications for successor bodies – both those receiving records to perform residual responsibilities, and archival repositories preserving the historic legacy. Where no formal records management arrangements existed, much was left to trust, chance and individual effort. The impact on record-keeping was not considered in deciding or planning change, nor continuity and long-term considerations. Records management itself is at greatest risk in times of change, as much happens in parallel, with movement of offices, staff, equipment and records to deadlines, and at short notice. Lack of resources can become a serious liability, with records and finding aids mislaid, or moved out of context. Records managers struggle with departmental staff who are disinterested, despondent, or unavailable. The case study suggests that the means to minimise disruption and risk is to have sound records management systems and change process plans in place. CNT's later reorganisations of the 1990s benefited from the presence and involvement of dedicated Records staff.

Re-structuring

Restructurings and reorganisations required vigilant records management to avoid detriment to record-keeping, but also sometimes provided opportunities for positive developments. The records manager had to be innovative and pragmatic rather than idealistic. Thus, out of CNT's 1994 restructuring emerged intellectual registry control and "records liaison officers". The 1998 reorganisation was used to improve the corporate position of the records management function within the organisation.

Transfers of functions and assets, and Privatisations and Out-sourcing

Transfer of records alongside assets and functions to another authority, a new owner, or during privatisation and out-sourcing was unmonitored where records management was absent, or only partly involved in arrangements. The key records management issue was control, so that only what should be transferred was, and this was recorded for accountability, specifically ensuring compliance with section 3(6) of the Public Records Act where applicable. The latter process, involving several stages and parties, and without awareness amongst departmental staff, was best co-ordinated by a single control function. Events in the case study, before and after CNT's professional records management existed, show that this was the means to obtain departmental co-operation.

¹⁴² Author's Knowledge.

As with reorganisations, it was not feasible, or necessarily desirable, to stop out-sourcing, but it was possible to identify the negative aspects, and to provide a solution to these through clearly defined policy and procedures such as legal agreements and records management inspections. Before formal records management, only problems were identified. Afterwards, it was possible to implement systems and monitor records. Co-operation by staff and consultants was required, and the case study highlights difficulties in implementation and maintenance of, and compliance with, policy and procedures even with formal records management. Physical distance, passage of time, changes in personnel on both sides, all contributed to risk of records matters being neglected or mishandled. However, there was greater potential for awareness and for addressing or avoiding problems with a professional function.

Acquisitions and Mergers, and Closures

Closure of an organisation or office can instigate sudden and frenetic records activity where records have not previously been considered or managed. All organisations in the case study after 1966 dealt with records in a closure situation as a specific project or task, but not all applied records management. The case study illustrates the role of personalities in closure situations, and their influence on whether handover and disposal were successful – records co-ordinators, departmental staff, county archivists, and staff in the partnership and successor bodies. This still applied where formal records management existed, particularly if only present in one body, or of insufficient status to influence decision-processes. However, the role of personality carried greater risk in the absence of records management systems. Organised and interested non-records managers could successfully sort records, and qualifications benchmark, rather than guarantee, that professional staff will out-perform competent administrators. However, a records management system provided framework and standards for consistent and informed decisions and procedures ensuring compliance with legislative requirements and organisational policy.

The research undertaken confirms the value of records management to a closing organisation. Its application enabled more orderly and accountable transfer and disposal of records, and the earlier applied the better. Where systematised records management with professional staff was present, even if only for closed records as at MKDC, handovers from a closing body occurred more efficiently. In the receiving body, issues, and requirements were considered and addressed when formal professional records management existed. This suggests that the complex and difficult process of closure would benefit if records management was in place from creation of an organisation.

Data shows records management could and did influence change processes for the better management of records, which both supported business and secured quality archive collections. To enable this, a records management function needed to exist, and be recognised by its own organisation and/or the transferring body, as a useful contributor. The evidence for this is that until the 1980s records management was considered part of the closure arrangements for new

town corporations only to the extent of needing to do something with the records, and that was seen as an administrative task, not as 'records management'. There were no qualified records managers to contribute to strategic decision-making processes about records during closure and transfer. The low-grade record-keepers in registries would get involved – if ever – late in the process, and then only with the routine, but detailed, work associated with transferring or receiving records. Records management was a low priority at these times. Thus, in the new towns case, if leaving all records for CNT would suffice, that was all that was done. However, in 1997-98 with the UDCs, and even more so with the HATs after 1999, there was more thought and planning applied to records sorting, retention and disposal, and to transfer within these organisations, because of the formal and proactive records management function within CNT/EP. However, the case study also shows that due to the Government's failure to require, specify in detail, and monitor, compliance on records matters by public bodies in close-down, a dedicated records management function in a receiving body could only guide, recommend, suggest and request. It had no powers over the other organisation prior to handover, and depended on the other body for the records received, and their condition.

Archival successors

With hindsight, archival selection would have been less complicated if a decision had been taken by the 1966 working party that all new town records should go to the PRO, rather than be split with local repositories. This would have avoided duplication of holdings, and inconsistency in selection and cataloguing between repositories, and probably resulted, overall, in a better quality and maintained new town archive. PRO deposit and cataloguing arrangements were more stringent than local record offices. Some repositories left collections uncatalogued, and, as time progressed, moved between extremes of taking almost whatever was offered or available, to, due to lack of storage space, rejecting records selected as archival by knowledgeable CNT/EP archivist/records managers, and wanting to de-accession existing deposits. CNT records managers detected a reluctance amongst some repositories to hold even localised records of central government due to shortage of funds, space and cataloguers. A solely national approach to archival selection would possibly have inconvenienced local researchers in travelling to Kew, but been balanced by the benefit of a single new towns research point. Comprehensive national archives and records legislation could resolve such issues.

The overall conclusion of this chapter is that the case study suggests that, whilst change is unavoidable, it is vital to ensure that fundamental policies and practices for good record-keeping and information management operate despite organisational change, and indeed support and enhance change and business continuity. This needs to be recognised and planned for, and a formal records management function is the key tool in this process.

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The key research questions identified in Chapter 1 were:

- 1) How did the finite and changing organisations in the case study approach records management? With what results?
- 2) What were the factors – internal and external – which influenced or directed the approach taken and the results achieved? Were there limitations? Were mistakes made? What worked or did not work?
- 3) What are the effects of organisational change on records management as demonstrated by the case study?
- 4) What lessons can be drawn for records management in such situations? What factors contribute to success, and what needs to be put in place?

The conclusion is structured as follows:

- Section 9.1 presents a summary analysis of the case study findings in response to the key research questions.
- Section 9.2 presents recommendations for professional practice, particularly in finite or frequently-changing organisations, based on the thesis evidence. The case study provides examples of successful and unsuccessful records management practice, and assesses the causes.
- Section 9.3 considers the suitability and value of the thesis methodology, and makes suggestions for future research.
- Section 9.4 provides a concluding summary statement regarding the potential contribution of the thesis to the development of professional theory and practice.

9.1 ANALYSIS OF THE CASE STUDY

The thesis examined records management in a central government function which created records, and ultimately archives, of historical interest. As explained in Chapters 2 and 3, the new towns programme, and later, the related urban renewal programme, had major planning, geographic, community and social development implications of national, regional and local significance, which stimulated international interest. Some forty public bodies directly delivered the programmes across half a century from 1946. The case study focused on 1961-1999, being the operational period of CNT as residuary body for all twenty one English new towns and Cwmbran in Wales, and latterly for eight urban development corporations and six housing action trusts. Contextual information before and after this period was provided, but the main research period concluded when CNT combined with URA to operate as English Partnerships.

In examining the first two research questions – how finite and changing organisations in the case study approached records management, what internal and external factors influenced or directed the approach taken, and what resulted – Chapters 4 and 5 demonstrated that there was no co-ordination of records management across new town organisations before 1992. All the English and Welsh new town corporations had closed before CNT introduced dedicated formal records management in 1992. Records management policy and practice did not emerge from any one source – new town bodies themselves, the Government in general or sponsor body specifically, the Public Record Office, local authority archivists, or the archives/records management profession. The undefined status of the bodies and their records caused, or was used as an excuse for, a lack of policy, strategy and action over many years.

The opportunity in the 1960s – highlighted by Peter Walne – to develop and co-ordinate records management in all new town bodies through the Public Records Acts was missed because of Government disinterest, and lack of thought for the consequences. The ACA/NTA working party of 1982 attempted to co-ordinate selection of archives, prompted by the closures and expected closures of new town organisations. However, this initiative was short-term and only prompted by individual interested local authority archivists, and lacked Government authority. Subsequent dealings were at a local level between individual corporations and archivists, and were linked to new town closures. CNT's dealings with archivists at this time were similarly limited to closures of its Hertfordshire and Crawley offices.

Without overall co-ordination there was no incentive for formal records management within new town bodies. The case study exemplifies the consequences of this omission. Organisations generally suffered poor records creation, maintenance and storage, and lacked systematised review and disposal. The exceptions were those running central registries, and those with professionally-run records centres (Telford and Milton Keynes development corporations). Nevertheless, these exceptions had limited value and impact because they did not offer life-cycle or organisation-wide records management, depended on individuals for success, were unsustainable, and applied to individual organisations rather than new towns collectively. Good records management in any one organisation did not necessarily endure its lifetime, or survive transfer to the successor body. Benefits, drawbacks and lessons learnt were not fully shared, and were largely lost when each organisation closed.

This overall poor records management in new town bodies before 1992, and lack of strategy, resulted in a lost opportunity for a carefully-selected and high-quality new town archive. Before 1992, some archival material was dispersed outside of places of deposit, into museums, libraries and local interest groups. The archive created in places of deposit was ad hoc and survived by chance. Unco-ordinated and subjective selection resulted in duplication of records across local archives, discrepancies in material selected, and gaps in series. Records which ought to have been destroyed were preserved through haste and lack of information. Repositories increased

their storage costs by inappropriate retention of material they did not have the knowledge or resources to evaluate. Locating and sifting information for researchers was made more complicated. Initiatives for a form of central new town archive, such as those by NTUDA and the Planning Exchange, indicated a desire or need for improved identification and accessibility of archive sources. Some deposited collections remained, and remain, uncatalogued as low priority. This suggests a retrospective need for a high-level working party, or project, to focus on these issues and report with proposals for their resolution. For example, a project to (re)catalogue dispersed new town collections to a common standard, could bring collections together, through description, into a 'virtual' archive.

Archival repositories would have benefited from dealing with a central records management function in the new town bodies, to provide them with quality archives in good condition and supported by full contextual information resulting from a well-managed life-cycle system, and pre-selected from an agreed retention and selection policy. However, improvement in the creating/depositing body alone is insufficient, as problems encountered with record offices by CNT's central records management function demonstrate. Record offices also ought to improve their status and performance. This suggests examination of appropriate funding for local government repositories, a national records and archives act to bring consistency to national and local repositories, and attention to common standards and approaches within record offices, and the archives/records management profession and its representative associations.

The award of public records status to CNT in 1984 in itself did not immediately address the problems as it did not apply to CNT's legacy bodies until the point of transfer. This created an inconsistency and legacy problem for CNT. Such status also needed to be accompanied by effective implementation of formal records management. That status alone was insufficient is proved by how little was done in 1984-88 by CNT and the PRO. Without professional records management in CNT there was no one to champion records management or capitalise upon public record status to address issues. The PRO was not dynamic, proactive or resourced to respond to that situation. In 1988-92 CNT was forced by sheer volume of inherited records to take records management more seriously, but did so on a reactive, fire-fighting basis, using part-time, temporary and ad hoc resources and solutions. Eventually, a dedicated records management function was established in 1992, some eight years after public record status was awarded. It came through pressure from individuals below executive management experiencing difficulties in managing records in 1988-92, and utilising PRO influence, not from an in-built organisational desire for, or automatic understanding and acceptance of, records management as a standard business process.

It is not anachronistic to state therefore that new town records could have been better managed before 1992. Their fate was largely left to accidental intervention, chance, circumstance, and the abilities and interests of individual personalities. The lack of systematised records management

from outset to conclusion meant that records were often disorganised, kept unnecessarily, lost, or dispersed inappropriately, and that archival survival was a matter of luck not judgement. With better records management in the legacy organisations the transfer to CNT and subsequent work for CNT would have been easier. By the time formal records management was finally applied collectively to the English (and Cwmbran) new town records in 1992, the records workload and backlog was tremendous and needed more resources than would be provided by CNT, and later EP, management.

Examination of CNT's formal records management function from 1992 in Chapters 6 and 7 demonstrates that ingredients for successful records management were: a secure position within the organisation, top-down support, well-defined purpose and plan of action, and effective communication. Findings indicate that the best approach in the case study to problematical inherited records, and to minimise the risks and negative effects of organisational change (explored in Chapter 8), was professional, centralised, organisation-wide, life-cycle records management. At the end of the case study, CNT/EP was as well-placed as it could be within the extant organisational and legislative framework, to receive records of other organisations, to face the challenges and complexities of electronic records management and information access compliance.

However, this development was not straightforward, or easily achieved and maintained, reflecting a fundamental lack of prioritisation for, and widespread failure to understand, records management. The period from 1992 shows the on-going reliance of the function on senior champions for existence and position, with on-going risk therefore to records management, records and archives. Ultimately, it was the public records legislative requirement, kept to the fore by the professional staff, that maintained the records management presence in CNT/EP in the face of organisational disinterest in best practice. The case study also shows the struggle for records managers from 1992 between implementing good records management (based not just on professional theory and standards, but fit for purpose), and compromising with pragmatic and ad hoc solutions based on workplace circumstances. The effect of an organisation putting 'records management' in place but not structuring and resourcing it effectively – in effect paying lip-service – was that records were retained unnecessarily with implications for storage costs and information access, and records professionals were not utilised to optimum benefit both for immediate records management tasks and for application to wider organisational information management. It is important to place this assessment in context. Compared to sectors without the benefit of central government culture and public record status, and to NDPBs and agencies which operated without formal records management or even DROs, CNT's records management from 1992 was good, successful, and even exemplary. The point arising from the study data is that textbook or *ideal* records management was desirable, and ought to have been achievable. However, it was not completely attained, regardless of the proven efforts of individuals, or of the

introduction of professional records management, because of the organisational and wider cultural environment in which records management operated.

This leads on to the third research question, examining the effects of organisational change on records management as demonstrated by the case study. The case study supports the maxim that change is the only constant. Chapter 1 explores the literature relating to organisational change, and Chapters 3 and 4 outline the extent of organisational change in the new town and related bodies, and change is an undercurrent through the thesis. Chapter 8 particularly focuses on the effects and risks of organisational change for records and records management. Records management developed and operated in an uncertain and pressurised environment. Change upon change brought ever more complexity, and made implementing records management retrospectively more difficult. The issues and problems arising in the case study from change without formal records management were common and repetitive, from the 1960s into the twenty first century – in corporations, in CNT, the UDCs and HATs, in URA, and in the merged EP. Decentralisation or absence of registries led to diverse and often poor-quality record-keeping. As records moved between organisations and time elapsed, it became harder to review records, to assess context and significance, to identify liabilities for ongoing business need, especially when the staff who had dealt with issues and events were no longer employed. Often files gave an incomplete story, so it was not possible, for example, to tell whether a lease on a file had expired or not. Privatisation and outsourcing of functions, staff and records, and constant changes in the consultants used, added ever more to the difficulties of controlling records and information, for an organisation itself and its successor body.

The new town organisations typify the many bodies that have intentionally finite lives, or face unforeseen re-organisation and closure. The difference between quangos and the local authorities abolished in 1974, 1985 and the 1990's is largely one of expectation. A quango generally expects to close, although the date may not be determined at outset, and announced closure dates can be revised, as happened frequently with the corporations. Local authorities generally expect a long-term future within the democratic framework, albeit with periodic changes of geographical boundaries and transfers of functions between tiers of local government. All organisations may change remit and functions, like CNT did. Change per se has implications for records and wider information management. Closures, mergers and transfers of functions and assets particularly put records at risk. In the public sector there is no automatic regulation of this matter. Records considerations are often only raised by pressure lobbies, as with local government re-organisation for the GLC and unitary authorities. Even then, resulting guidance or provisions can be vague. Attention to *national* legislation would therefore benefit both central and local government and improve delivery and accountability of Government information and services, and the quality of national records in general.

The case study shows CNT ‘closing the stable door after the horse had bolted’ in its introduction of records management in the late 1980s, and then not implementing it most effectively – even with the benefit of professional staff after 1992 – because of internally-created and externally-imposed limitations. This need not have occurred, and need not be the case in future. Formal and professional records management should be a clear and obvious requirement for central government creating public sector bodies, at public expense, for public benefit.

Records management thrives on stability and continuity. An organisational focus on current and future activities, and an ethos of constant adaptation, flexibility and fluidity tends to give low priority to corporate memory and historical legacy. In this environment, record-keeping is valued only for providing immediate access to information. The benefits of introducing or improving systems and processes can be quickly undone by organisational change. The case study illustrates how records management was itself vulnerable to cuts in resources, as at CNT in 1993. To have effort and achievements negated is frustrating for practitioners. However, organisational change is inevitable, and the rights or wrongs of change are not the main issue of this thesis. The lesson to be drawn is the need to manage change situations well from a records management perspective – not from, or for, self-interest of practitioners, but for business interests, with which the records management discipline is instinctively and naturally aligned. Indeed, this study suggests that good records management – as promoted by the formal function at CNT – is beneficial for organisational change in helping the transfer and survival of records and information for on-going business. For instance, the records transfers of UDCs and HATs were better managed by CNT in the late 1990s than those of the new town corporations were before 1992.

The fourth research question considered what lessons might be drawn for records management in such situations, what factors contribute to success, and what needs to be put in place. There are lessons to be drawn from the case study which have wider application in emphasising the value to *all* organisations of moving to a well-structured, organised records and information management environment. The research evidence shows that a *combination* of factors need to be in place for successful records management in general, and specifically for optimum management of records in a changing and/or finite environment.

The first lesson is that application of formal records management, even retrospectively, can significantly improve records and information. The case study demonstrates this at CNT from 1992. Everything positive that happened to records management in the case study shows what can be achieved and how it helped the business, and indicates how much better still it would operate with unequivocal support, and especially if it is possible to incorporate formalised records management from the creation of an organisation. Records management should be applied for the benefit of the organisation and the wider public sector. Successful conduct of business depends on the right information in the right place at the right time, and misuse, abuse,

theft and loss of information can lead to lack of transparency, damage to reputation and trust, litigation, financial loss, and business failure. Individual employees may face unnecessary workplace obstacles and pressure. An organisation that concentrates on a particular aspect of its business (for example, 'delivery') to the neglect of the administrative/support/information framework that underpins 'core' activities will suffer, if not fail. Current information access legislation and movement towards an electronic records environment need a sound records management basis.

There is opportunity for widespread change in organisational culture and practices across the public sector, to appreciation of records as a strategic resource and acceptance of records management as routine. In a technological environment where people are equipped to easily communicate, there are higher expectations of information provision and response times across multiple channels. Records and information management should be in place as part of an ethos that recognises a knowledge-driven organisation as the most efficient and successful, one with assurance that its information assets are accounted for, accurate, accessible, secure, and confidential where necessary. An information-sharing culture with an integrated and organisation-wide approach to workflow and systems, is best placed to meet all situations and manage change in a controlled manner. There should be working links between registries, records centres and record offices, between records management units, IT sections, between business processes and record keeping. An information strategy will help ensure information systems meet current and future organisation needs and achieve strategic alignment. However, a strategy based on IT alone, that excludes records management considerations, is flawed. In a silo mentality, it is possible for IT systems to develop in isolation from working practices and long-term records considerations. A co-ordinated approach is the best means for an efficient and robust organisation. Investment in records management for improved efficiency and effectiveness, bringing long-term and long-lasting benefits, and savings financial and otherwise, has knock-on effects to all stakeholders in the business processes and output of a public sector organisation – to Government, taxpayers, service-users, and partnership bodies (in the private sector to shareholders, customers and clients).

The second lesson is the importance of a systematised and programmed approach to successfully manage change. The case study shows that an organisation should not rely on transitory individual good performance or pockets of excellence for records management. It needs a coherent and embedded records management system; one with ability to identify and adapt to changing circumstances and new developments, whilst maintaining professional principles and standards. If the records cycle and process is understood and in place, and the resources provided and empowered to manage it, there should be no reason for significant records backlogs and hold-ups to appear within an organisation.

As seen in Chapters 6 and 7, CNT's formal function adapting and surviving from 1992, addressing new issues and working on resolving those inherited, shows that records and information asset management can contribute positively in a changing environment. Therefore, if systems are built into new organisations automatically and comprehensively from creation, subsequent change can be planned and controlled with maximum thought and co-ordination, and minimum error and disruption. This will ensure that good systems survive and adapt, meet ongoing operational and compliance needs, and in the ultimate event of closure, leave a worthwhile legacy for successor bodies or archival posterity.

The evidence of Chapter 8 particularly urges that records management should exist in finite bodies from creation, and not be implemented only at wind-up, and that both closing and inheriting bodies need to be organised. Even an organisation with formal records management that inherits records from organisations without formal records management, can struggle to deal with the consequences. If the two bodies have different records status – as CNT and its legacy bodies did after the 1984 application of the Public Records Act to CNT alone – issues of access and disposition of records are made more complicated, with increased risk of inconsistency. It should not be left to the goodwill of the closing body to manage the disposal and handover of records, leaving the successor body empowered only to advise, request, cajole, and then accept what it gets and deal with any problems, as was the case with CNT. Continuity and succession planning are required for smooth transfer of business and assets. Controls and monitoring are needed from an appointed body, such as the National Audit Office, and realistic penalties for corporate bodies and individual staff, by means of with-holding salaries, performance bonuses, or redundancy payments, or even formal investigation and prosecution. Situations should not arise which lead to common anecdotal evidence of general managers personally shredding sacks full of public records, or removing them to their private property.

The third lesson is the importance of having appropriate records management staff in place. The case study shows that recruiting, motivating and retaining the right people for the job, and equipping them for successful delivery is essential. Many records management problems accrued because of the organisational vacuum in status, authority, knowledge and mind-set between those applied to records matters – senior administrators and junior clerks. The move to permanent, dedicated, trained and qualified staff at CNT from 1992 (as seen in Chapter 6) was necessary to guide and focus the organisation's records management and find solutions to accumulated records issues. Records management is not performed effectively if it relies solely, or mainly, on part-time or transitory resources – such as temporaries, ex-staff, staff under notice of redundancy, or consultants – on staff not matched to the task, on under-resourced, over-stretched, or demoralised staff. The rapidly changing nature of work, with frequent reorganisations, job insecurity, manpower shortages and recruitment 'freezes', new workplace initiatives and working directives, and myriad legislative requirements, standards, and codes of practice, puts pressure on individuals as never before. This particularly affects middle management – where records

managers presently tend to be placed – who occupy the operational front-line. A records management department should therefore be staffed with practitioners whose quality and quantity is fit for purpose, whose role is understood and supported by management, and who are positioned to operate strategically and in alignment with organisational objectives. Such an establishment best serves the organisation and manages natural turnover and other forms of change with minimum disruption.

Fourthly, the case study shows how dependent records managers are on senior champions and management backing to succeed, and how vulnerable records management becomes when supportive personalities change or disappear. There is a limitation on individual practitioners, no matter how competent or enthusiastic, to achieve major and sustainable records management improvement. They may understand the issues and requirements. They can capitalise on opportunities to introduce, resource or expand records management. They can showcase best practice and proactively promote. Nevertheless, records management remains at constant risk of set-back and failure due to change, and the powerlessness of individuals. For example, best practice may persuade organisations to operate in-house records management for service-quality, accountability and cost-effectiveness as opposed to out-sourcing, but there is nothing to require an organisation to have a records management function in the first place. Awarding public record status to CNT in 1984 did not immediately create a recognisable records management function. A nominal DRO was appointed, but staffing developed gradually only after 1988 and was not formalised until 1992.

One obvious conclusion from this, is that a knowledge-based organisation must place information professionals into senior posts, dedicated and empowered to implement best practice records and information management, and bring changes in an informed and planned manner. To participate, professional records managers should be open to embracing more significant and critical areas of business management than their traditionally focused, and relatively junior, roles. However, the structures and posts must first exist.

This leads to the fifth lesson. The thesis demonstrates that in the existing organisational and legislative framework nothing has fundamentally changed or improved in the approach to records for decades, despite organisational change, despite increases in availability of professional literature and proactive practitioners, despite a higher-profile PRO, and despite the evidential value of current and historical records. Most executive and senior decision-makers are not information professionals. They do not automatically appreciate or want a records management function in their structures. Amongst those that know of records management, many perceive it as non-essential, and a financial luxury, or associate it only with paper filing or storage of unwanted records. Poor records management is not recognised as a corporate risk, let alone good records management valued as best practice. Without a compliance requirement, organisations often prioritise resources elsewhere, pay lip-service, short-cut, or simply ignore, and problems

continue to arise or remain unresolved. Records managers in post are faced with constant 're-invention of the wheel', and 'one step forward, two steps back' scenarios. This squanders public money and neglects valuable information assets and resources.

The data in this thesis suggests that records management is not something that should be either ignored, or addressed at a low, local, or individual organisation level. New national legislation may break the repetitive and unproductive cycle, putting good records and information management automatically at the centre of organisational culture, strategy, and structure to support business processes and objectives, significantly enhancing the public sector's overall performance and effectiveness. It is legislation and regulations that lead organisations to regard disciplines, such as Finance, as integral and vital, thereby providing the career development and financial recognition that go beyond vocation in attracting quality and high-performing staff. It was public records legislation that took records management in the new towns case study as far as it did, and kept it there. However, the Public Records Acts, 1958 and 1967, are not comprehensive or prescriptive, and do not meet modern situations. They especially do not relate well to an environment of multiple, small, and fast-changing government agencies, with non-civil service employees, as opposed to traditional departments of state. They do not account for changing technology and records formats, and traditional PRO review processes do not sit well with modern electronic systems and records. PRO and other governmental guidance and codes of practice, and international standards, useful as they are, remain non-mandatory and therefore have not to date secured, or shown evidence of securing, the required level, rate, and permanency of culture change. UK information access legislation (which many practitioners hoped would be of major assistance to records management) has often, in practice, as with the growing interest in knowledge management, been associated by management not with records managers, but with legal compliance and information technology. This results in organisational 'records management' left to non-records managers as at CNT before 1992.¹ If new legislation were to establish records management as a statutory and cultural norm at organisational level, clearly define roles and remits such as those of DROs, and link practitioners to required competencies and professional benchmarks, the impact and influence and benefits of improved records and information should flow. All the professional and inter-personal skills, techniques and effort by individual practitioners advocated in records management texts, and evidenced by the above lessons from this case study, are still required. However, best practice will have a strong and secure platform.

These conclusions lead therefore to a general and over-arching recommendation to Government. National records and archives legislation is the necessary first step to explicitly embed a culture

¹ In 2004, the Office of the Information Commissioner found the majority of UK local authorities had not implemented policy statements on records management, had not employed an individual responsible for records management, and few had undertaken training for non-records management staff. Helen Forde, " 'We must remember our past so that we do not repeat it' ", *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, vol 25, no 2, October 2004, p121.

of records management in public bodies, to foster efficient, effective and economic management of the records and information underpinning business processes, to achieve maximum value for money for the public purse, and to secure the archives that form the major evidential resource for the nation. It should not be left to the efforts of individual practitioners and their champions, as in the case study, to secure and maintain good records management, as such efforts are inevitably transient and at constant risk from organisational change and individual decision-makers.

9.2 PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS

Pending new national legislation, immediate and general improvements in organisational practice may still be made. Industry standards and best practice for records management services and processes are increasingly available for benchmarking, and a sound framework is contained in the international records management standard *ISO 15489*.² The following recommendations, based on evidence from this case study, offer a simple checklist for efficient, effective and economic records and information management provision in an organisation from cradle to grave. These will help an organisation avoid the cost and waste of records and information which are disorganised, difficult or impossible to identify, locate, access, and process. They offer a systematised alternative to inappropriate ad hoc, stop-gap and short-term measures.

- 1) Records should be identified as a corporate resource and asset, and poor records management as a corporate risk. Consequently, records management strategy, projects and progress should be matters reported upon at board and executive management committee level, and should be considered for inclusion in corporate plans and annual reports.
- 2) Records management should be integral to the core establishment of an organisation from the outset, as is usual with Personnel or Payroll.
 - a) A suitably qualified and experienced records manager should be appointed. The records manager must be expected to undertake continuing professional development, and to gain awareness in related disciplines, in order to meet the required competencies for records and information management and to provide necessary expertise to the organisation.
 - b) The records manager should be placed in a corporate department that services and interacts with the whole organisation, so that the records management function is of relevance to all staff and locations, and is *recognised* as being so.
 - c) The records manager must be placed in a position of seniority and responsibility to be able to meet, inform, advise and influence executive decision-makers.
 - d) The records manager should by virtue of position automatically be invited to participate in all internal (and external partnership) committees and working groups

² British Standards Institution, *BS ISO 15489-1:2001*.

related to records, information and knowledge management issues, systems and initiatives.

- e) The records manager must be supported with appropriate resources: staffing, storage, equipment and budgetary.

3) Records management policy and systems should be established from the outset to organise and control the records and information of the organisation.

- a) Control systems should be established and managed from the centre by the records manager. Whether this control is best physical or intellectual, and whether the implementation of policy and practice on the ground is centralised to corporate records management staff or decentralised to departmental staff, will depend on the circumstances of the organisation. There is flexibility in application. However, that organisational decision should have the support of the corporate records manager who has to manage the system. Central control of the overall system is non-negotiable if it is to work without being undermined.
- b) Records management control should be applied to records from creation to disposal, and to all formats, so that description and content, use and maintenance, storage, access, accountability and auditing, appraisal and disposition, are consistent, co-ordinated, and mutually supportive. The records management function should be the natural focus for this control, and be seen as a point of expertise, guidance and knowledge for information activity in the organisation, and external liaison on these matters. The organisation-wide life-cycle approach must be underpinned by executive instruction, facilitated by organisational structures, and supported by physical resources.

4) Mergers and re-structuring of departments or whole organisations must include the records manager from the outset in evaluation of risks, implications of outcome, and of strategies to be undertaken if the course is agreed upon. The records manager should not be brought into the process after decisions have been taken, and then be expected to resolve problems in the wake of, or arising from re-organisation that more timely and high-level involvement might have avoided.

5) If the organisation is finite, an exit strategy should be compiled as early as practicable to deal with all the issues surrounding closure and transfer or disposal of functions, assets and liabilities, and that strategy must include records management issues. The exit strategy team should include the records manager. All liaison with external bodies regarding closure or transfer should be timely (at least two years before) and include the records manager for discussion of records issues.

- 6) If an organisation retains a residual team as part of its wind-down process, after the main staffing complement has left, that residual team must include records management staff appropriate to fulfil remaining records tasks. If necessary, the organisation should provide funds to any successor body or bodies for the records management team to remain operational for a post-closure period, to be pre-determined on the basis of an informed assessment of remaining tasks.
- 7) The successor body or bodies to a finite organisation should be required to have corporate records management in place as a prerequisite of being deemed a suitable recipient for the functions, assets or liabilities of the finite organisation.
- 8) The status of records (for example public records) between a finite organisation and its successor body should be the same to avoid discrepancies in treatment, access and disposition both before and after transfer. If not the same, a formal process of regularising status needs to be instigated at the time the successor body is determined, and should ideally be resolved before transfer.

9.3 REFLECTION ON METHODOLOGY

The qualitative methodology explained in Chapter 1 is considered to have been appropriate for the purpose of the thesis, and has allowed the research questions to be explored, conclusions drawn and recommendations made. The study's new town subject matter proved the rich source of issues and examples envisaged when the thesis topic was formulated. The immersion approach to research and intensive data-collection, such as examination of all twenty two new towns inherited by CNT and the links with associated record offices, rather than sampling, worked well in allowing fulsome coverage and understanding of the subject matter. It produced consistent evidence, and ensured triangulation of data sources for validity and reliability and non-bias of analysis and conclusions drawn.³

The case study approach undertaken in this thesis met descriptive (history), explanatory (how or why), and exploratory (causal explanations) purposes.⁴ The placing of events into a chronology in Chapter 4 determined the significant issues and sea-changes in new towns records management over time, and suggested the causal events and relationships to be examined in detail in subsequent chapters. The exploration of the causes of good or bad records management situations, illustrated issues of wider concern and general application beyond the immediate case study context, leading to the strategic argument and recommendations of the thesis – what could be done better and what needs to be done. It is felt that the conclusions, recommendations and

³ Yin, p44-51.

⁴ Yin, pp1-15.

theory arising from this thesis are empirically-valid, defensible, and 'grounded' in the evidence of the research data.⁵

The thesis provides a novel and important study of the development of records management in the English new town organisations, and this work may be publishable in a more concise, book form. The thesis may generate research articles. It adds case study examples and evidence to professional knowledge and theory, and contributes some recommendations to better professional practice. There are few case study examples of how practitioners deal with change on a rapid, large-scale and on-going basis in their organisations. To that end it is recommended that future detailed studies of other finite and changing bodies are undertaken to explore the same or similar questions as this thesis and gather more data. Research could also be undertaken into user-satisfaction levels, especially of external researchers, in order to explore experiences with identification of, and access to, dispersed new town archives, and the availability, quality and usefulness of finding-aids. The thesis is also of general public interest in that its findings and recommendations have implications for the public purse and better organisation of public bodies and the public record. The issues are significant therefore in theoretical, policy and practical terms.⁶ The likely impact of this study is that it contributes to calls for national records and archives legislation.

9.4 CONCLUDING STATEMENT

The need for more empirical research data to form the basis for decision-making has long been advocated.⁷ Case studies, such as this thesis, show records management issues in practice, and provide a means to assess the impact of policies, legislation, standards, and organisational environment on records and archives. Records management research should address issues of change:

"Change and planning necessitate that organizations and records managers support and engage in research as well as ensure that the professional literature of records management improves in quality and not merely quantity. Records managers will need to strengthen their skills as consumers and doers of research, especially evaluation and policy research. For records management to reach its potential in this decade and beyond, it must realize the importance of research to better management of change, and the importance of high quality and useful professional literature. That literature must challenge, educate, and provide assistance."⁸

⁵ Gorman, pp26,50,83; A Michael Huberman and Matthew B Miles, *The Qualitative Researcher's Companion*, Thousand Oaks, CA/London, Sage Publications, 2002, pp19-20,29-33.

⁶ Yin, p147.

⁷ Slater, pvii.

⁸ Schwartz and Hernon, p296.

It is hoped that this thesis provides a useful research contribution that can guide organisations in future – particularly those known to be finite or experiencing change – to better prepare for and manage their records responsibilities.

This thesis contends that it was legislative records requirements, *combined with* professional records management, that made the difference in the case study as to whether and when records management occurred, and to how well it was applied. The author would be pleased if that finding, grounded in research data, helps lead towards improved Government arrangements for records management policy and practice in public bodies. The thesis supports an argument for timely introduction of comprehensive national archives and records legislation that addresses fundamental causes and issues of poor records and information management in the public sector. This would assist both efficiency in current business operations and declared Government aspirations since the 1990s for modernised, open, accountable, knowledge-based, joined-up government and public services, and ensure the systematised creation and survival of quality archives of historic significance for the national memory.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: SAMPLE LETTER TO AN ARCHIVIST

Dear

[NAME] NEW TOWN RECORDS

I am hoping that you can help me gain background information on records activities at [name] New Town. I am undertaking a doctorate at U.C.L. into the records of our new towns as a study in records management. My tutors are Dr. Anne Thurston and Miss Elizabeth Shepherd, and a letter of introduction from them is attached.

I am interested in the following areas:

1) Record-keeping at [name] Development Corporation

Eg. references to Records staff, registries, filing systems etc.

2) The Record Office's Perspective and Memories

- a) What were relations like with the Development Corporation? When did contact begin? Frequency, nature etc.
- b) Ditto C.N.T.
(Obviously, I have some information on this from C.N.T.'s viewpoint).
- c) Did the Record Office input or influence records policy or practice at the Development Corporation or the C.N.T. Regional Office?
- d) Selection and Transfer of records.
What policy was/is adopted?
What records are being taken and why?
Was/is the Record Office reactive or pro-active?
- e) Is the holding of new town records likely to pose any particular issues or difficulties for the Record office? Eg. storage space, public access requests, cataloguing. How do you envisage that these would be tackled?

I would appreciate being able to discuss the above with you. Also, experience indicates that record offices are the main source for information on dealings between themselves and development corporations as the latter's copies of correspondence with record offices seem not to have survived. Would it therefore be possible to access your own Office file(s)? Elsewhere I have done this, it has proved invaluable.

Any assistance that you can offer will be gratefully received, and acknowledged in my thesis.

I could visit on [date]. If that is not convenient please let me know of dates that would suit you. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

D.R. Biggs

APPENDIX II: LETTER OF INTRODUCTION



School of Library, Archive and Information Studies
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON
Gower Street London WC1E 6BT

Tel: 071-387 7050 Direct Line: 071-380 7204 Fax: 071-383 0557 International: +44 71 383 0557

Director: Professor R. C. Alston, PhD, FSA

25 April 1995

To whom it may concern

RE: DAVID BIGGS

David Biggs is a part-time PhD student at the School of Library, Archive and Information Studies, University College London. He is researching the records of the New Towns as a study in records management.

We would be very grateful if you would give David the assistance he needs from your Record Office, in order to complete work which we hope will be of value to the archive/records management profession.

In particular, it would be most helpful if you would allow him access to your own office files on the new towns, as these may contain correspondence with development corporations, etc which would be invaluable to his research.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully

Dr Anne Thurston
Supervisor

Elizabeth Shepherd
Tutor to Archive Students

APPENDIX III: LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

The author interviewed the following individuals. Notes were made at each interview, which were typed up shortly after the interview. For a sample transcript, see Appendix V.

Local Archivists

4 Jan 1995	(telephone) Peter Walne, retired County Archivist of Hertfordshire (Hatfield, Hemel Hempstead, Welwyn Garden City, Stevenage) and member of 1966 working party on new town records.
2 Feb 1995	Gillian Sheldrick, Records Manager of Hertfordshire (Hatfield, Hemel Hempstead, Welwyn Garden City, Stevenage).
7 Feb 1995	Deborah Jenkins, Greater London Record Office (now London Metropolitan Archives) regarding GLC records.
25 April 1995	(telephone) Kath Rolph, Records Manager, Tyne and Wear Archives Service (Washington).
16 May 1995	Liz Rees, Principal Archivist of Tyne and Wear, and Records Manager Kath Rolph (Washington).
3 Aug 1995	Rachel Watson, County Archivist of Northamptonshire (Corby, Northampton).
24 Aug 1995	(telephone) Vic Gray, former County Archivist of Essex (Basildon, Harlow), and convenor of ACA/NTA working party on new town records.
1 Sep 1995	Jonathan Pepler, County Archivist of Cheshire (Runcorn, Warrington).
20 Nov 1995	David Rimmer, County Archivist of Gwent (Cwmbran).
14 Feb 1996	Ruth Bagley, Head of Records and Research of Shropshire (Telford).
11 June 1996	Richard Childs, County Archivist of West Sussex (Crawley).
17 July 1996	Elizabeth Stazicker, County Archivist of Cambridgeshire, and deputy Philip Saunders (Peterborough).
18 July & 10 Dec 1996	Ken Hall, County Archivist of Essex (former County Archivist of Lancashire – Central Lancashire and Skelmersdale) and deputy Richard Harris (Basildon, Harlow).
28 July 1997	Jennifer Gill, County Archivist of Durham (Aycliffe, Peterlee). David Butler, Deputy and former County Archivist (Aycliffe, Peterlee) and ex-TWAS (Washington).
28 Nov 2001	Peter Durrant, County Archivist of Berkshire (Bracknell).
30 April 2002	A M (Tony) Wherry, County Archivist of Worcestershire, and deputy Robin Whittaker (Redditch).
3 May 2002	Bruce Jackson, County Archivist of Lancashire (and ex-TWAS, Washington) and deputy Andrew Thynne (Central Lancashire, Skelmersdale).

Past and Present New Towns Staff:

27 Sept 1994	Chris Worth	Skelmersdale Development Corporation/CNT.
17 Feb 1995	Peggy Allison and Josie Jones	Central Lancashire Development Corporation/CNT.
24 March 1995	K A (Ken) Small	Redditch Development Corporation/CNT and member of ACA/NTA Working Party.
18 August 1995	Leonie Foster	Northampton Development Corporation/CNT.
22 August 1995	Ann Ford	Northampton Development Corporation/CNT.
31 August 1995	Janet Hilton	Northampton Development Corporation/CNT.
21 March 1996	Doreen Burton	Harlow Development Corporation/ CNT.
26 April 1996	Janice Bird	CNT Corby
16 Sept 2005 (telephone)	Urszula (Sula) Rayska	Telford Development Corporation and ACA/NTA Working Party.

Multiple interviews and conversations were held with the following on various dates:

David Boon	Basildon Development Corporation/CNT.
Maureen Boundy	Milton Keynes Development Corporation/CNT.
Ann Chamberlain	Runcorn Development Corporation/WRDC/CNT.
Rae Green	Telford Development Corporation/CNT.
Noreen Martin	Skelmersdale Development Corporation/CNT.

NB. In addition to the above formal interviewing, informal conversations and information-gathering took place with CNT, URA, UDC, HAT and PRO staff on a rolling basis as part of workplace activity.

APPENDIX IV: LIST OF RECORD OFFICES AND NEW TOWNS COVERED

The Places of Deposit designated to hold the archival records of the Commission for the New Towns, and the twenty two new town corporations for which it was the residual body.

RECORD OFFICE	TOWNS COVERED
PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE (THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES)	COMMISSION FOR THE NEW TOWNS CORPORATE RECORDS
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE	MILTON KEYNES
BERKSHIRE	BRACKNELL
CAMBRIDGESHIRE (transfer to Peterborough City Archives, 2005)	PETERBOROUGH
CHESHIRE	RUNCORN, WARRINGTON
DURHAM	AYCLIFFE, PETERLEE
ESSEX	BASILDON, HARLOW
GWENT	CWMBRAN
HERTFORDSHIRE	HATFIELD, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD, STEVENAGE, WELWYN GARDEN CITY
LANCASHIRE	CENTRAL LANCASHIRE, SKELMERSDALE
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE	CORBY, NORTHAMPTON
SHROPSHIRE	TELFORD
TYNE AND WEAR	WASHINGTON
WEST SUSSEX	CRAWLEY
WORCESTERSHIRE (formerly HEREFORD AND WORCESTER)	REDDITCH

APPENDIX V: SAMPLE TRANSCRIPT OF AN INTERVIEW

**APPENDIX VI: ORGANISATIONS TRANSFERRED TO THE
COMMISSION FOR THE NEW TOWNS (CNT)**

NEW TOWN	DATE DESIGNATED	DATE TRANSFERRED TO CNT
AYCLIFFE	19 APRIL 1947	1 APRIL 1988
BASILDON	4 JANUARY 1949	1 APRIL 1986
BRACKNELL	17 JUNE 1949	2 APRIL 1982
CENTRAL LANCASHIRE	26 MARCH 1970	1 JANUARY 1986
CORBY	1 APRIL 1950	1 APRIL 1980
CRAWLEY	9 JANUARY 1947	1 APRIL 1962
CWMBRAN	4 NOV. 1949	1 APRIL 1988
HARLOW	25 MARCH 1947	1 OCTOBER 1980
HATFIELD	20 MAY 1948	1 APRIL 1966
HEMEL HEMPSTEAD	4 FEB. 1947	1 APRIL 1962
MILTON KEYNES	23 JAN. 1967	1 APRIL 1992
NORTHAMPTON	14 FEB. 1968	2 APRIL 1985
PETERLEE	10 MARCH 1948	1 APRIL 1988 (transferred 1 July 1985 to Aycliffe Dev. Corporation)
PETERBOROUGH	21 JULY 1967	1 OCTOBER 1988
REDDITCH	10 APRIL 1964	2 APRIL 1985
RUNCORN	10 APRIL 1964	1 OCTOBER 1989 (transferred 1 April 1981 to Warrington Dev. Corporation)
SKELMERSDALE	9 OCTOBER 1961	2 APRIL 1985
STEVENAGE	11 NOV. 1946	1 JULY 1980
TELFORD (DAWLEY)	13 DEC. 1968 (16 JAN. 1963)	1 OCTOBER 1991
WARRINGTON	26 APRIL 1968	1 OCTOBER 1989
WASHINGTON	24 JULY 1964	1 APRIL 1988
WELWYN GARDEN CITY	20 MAY 1948	1 APRIL 1962

URBAN DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION	DATE DESIGNATED	DATE TRANSFERRED TO CNT
BIRMINGHAM HEARTLANDS	10 MARCH 1992	1 APRIL 1998
BLACK COUNTRY	14 MAY 1987	1 APRIL 1998
LONDON DOCKLANDS	2 JULY 1981	1 APRIL 1998
MERSEYSIDE	25 MARCH 1981	1 APRIL 1998
PLYMOUTH	1 APRIL 1993	1 APRIL 1998
TEESSIDE	15 MAY 1987	1 APRIL 1998
TRAFFORD PARK	10 FEBRUARY 1987	1 APRIL 1998
TYNE AND WEAR	15 MAY 1987	1 APRIL 1998

HOUSING ACTION TRUST	DATE DESIGNATED	DATE TRANSFERRED TO CNT
CASTLE VALE	30 JUNE 1993	1 APRIL 2005
NORTH HULL	18 JULY 1991	1 JANUARY 1999
LIVERPOOL	8 FEBRUARY 1993	1 OCTOBER 2005
STONEBRIDGE	27 JULY 1994	6 AUGUST 2007
TOWER HAMLETS	30 JUNE 1993	1 APRIL 2004
WALTHAM FOREST	9 DECEMBER. 1991	1 APRIL 2002

APPENDIX VII: THE COMMISSION FOR THE NEW TOWNS (CNT)

KEY DATES AND EVENTS¹

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>EVENT</u>
1961	Commission for the New Towns established, 1 October. First Board meeting held 2 October. Office opened in Glen House, Stag Place, Victoria, London.
1962	Transfer to CNT of Crawley and Hemel Hempstead Development Corporations. Offices opened in both towns.
1966	Transfer to CNT of Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield Development Corporations. Office opened at Welwyn Garden City (also covering Hatfield).
1978	Transfer of housing and related assets from CNT to local authorities in the four towns.
1980	Transfer to CNT of Corby, Harlow and Stevenage Development Corporations. Offices opened in all three towns. Sales of assets begin.
1982	Transfer to CNT of Bracknell Development Corporation. Office opened. Centralisation of functions into Glen House and closure of all town offices (1982-83) except Corby. Centralisation of records (except Corby). End of 'flat-topped' management structure and start of twin directorate structure.
1984	Order in Council bringing CNT records under the Public Records Acts.
1985	Transfer to CNT of Northampton, Redditch and Skelmersdale Development Corporations (April) and Central Lancashire Development Corporation (31 December). Offices opened.
1986	Transfer to CNT of Basildon Development Corporation. Office opened.
1988	Transfer to CNT of Aycliffe and Peterlee, Cwmbran, and Washington Development Corporations (April) and Peterborough Development Corporation (October). Offices opened in Washington (also covering Aycliffe and Peterlee) and Peterborough. Closure of Northampton Office (31 December) and transfer of work to Redditch Office and Glen House.
1989	Transfer to CNT of Warrington and Runcorn Development Corporation. Office opened in Warrington (sub-office in Runcorn until 1994).
1991	Transfer to CNT of Telford Development Corporation. Office opened in Telford to cover Telford and Redditch. Closure of Corby, Northampton, Redditch, Skelmersdale, and Washington offices. Expansion of Warrington Office to regional status as Northern Office (later North Office).
1992	Transfer to CNT of Milton Keynes Development Corporation. Office opened in Milton Keynes (April). End of twin directorate structure and start of matrix-management structure. Closure of Central Lancashire and Peterborough Offices.
1994	Transfer of Basildon housing assets to local authority and housing association. Closure of Basildon Office (residual site team retained until 1997 as part of South Office). End of matrix-management, and start of agency structure.
1998	Transfer to CNT of eight urban development corporations – Birmingham Heartlands, Black Country, London Docklands, Merseyside, Plymouth, Teesside, Trafford Park, Tyne and Wear. Sub-offices opened in London Docklands, and Middlesbrough (covering Tyne and Wear and Teesside). End of agency structure and regional offices. Relocation of headquarters to Milton Keynes and closure of Glen House.
1999	Transfer to CNT of North Hull Housing Action Trust. Merger with Urban Regeneration Agency (known as "English Partnerships"/EP). Combined body to be known as "English Partnerships"/EP. CNT and URA retain separate legal status.
Post-1999	On-going re-structuring, and "harmonisation" of terms and conditions between CNT and URA staff. EP and PRO sign Memorandum of Understanding that URA records and records created by merged EP be treated as Public Records (2000). Transfers to CNT of remaining HATs (Waltham Forest 2002, Tower Hamlets 2004, Castle Vale and

¹ The information herein re. transfers and office openings and closures is generally well known and is compiled from numerous sources recorded in the Bibliography. Data is enhanced by the author's personal knowledge of the organisation.

Liverpool 2005, Stonebridge 2007). Proposal from 2006 to replace EP with “Communities England”.

CNT's first meetings were held in Queen Anne's Chambers, London SW1. CNT moved into Glen House, Stag Place, Victoria, in 1962, and this London office remained its headquarters until the end of March 1998. The town locations were less stable, reflecting the changing state of the CNT's portfolio of assets and responsibilities. For nearly twenty years there were just Glen House and three town offices at Crawley and Hemel Hempstead (1962) and Welwyn Garden City (1966). This grew to seven offices in 1980 with the transfer of three development corporations at Corby, Harlow and Stevenage. After the centralisation of 1982-83 there was just Glen House and Corby (with a small residual office at Bracknell for a few months following the closure of its corporation), until 1985 when offices opened for Northampton, Redditch and Skelmersdale. Office openings followed at Basildon and Central Lancashire (1986), Washington and Peterborough (1988) and Warrington (1989) bringing the total number of CNT offices to a peak of nine. In fact the number of sites was greater if the sub-offices within the towns are counted, and in the case of Warrington there was a social development office located in Runcorn. The number was drastically reduced in 1991-92 with the closures of all town offices except Basildon and Warrington. With the opening of offices at Telford (1991) and Milton Keynes (1992) work was based on five geographical regions. There remained a small site office at Peterborough. In addition, in the 1990s as part of its international marketing programme, CNT had agents and representatives in Europe, North America and the Far East. In 1994 the main Basildon Office closed, although a small residual unit remained on site until 1998. The reorganisation of April 1998 saw the relocation of headquarters to Milton Keynes, and activity focused there and at Telford and Warrington, with sub-offices opened at Middlesbrough and London Docklands (1998-2000) as a result of the urban development corporation inheritance. This was the situation at the point of merger with the Urban Regeneration Agency in 1999.

BOARD

Chairman:

01/10/1961 - 30/09/1964	Sir Duncan L Anderson	
02/10/1964 - 30/06/1970	Henry W Wells	[member since 1961, knighted 1966]
01/07/1970 - 30/06/1971	Sir Harold Banwell	[acting chairman]
01/07/1971 - 31/03/1978	C Dennis Pilcher	[knighted 1974]
01/04/1978 - 31/03/1982	Colin Macpherson	[member since 1973]
01/04/1982 - 31/01/1995	Sir Neil Shields	[member since 1981]
01/02/1995 - 30/09/1998	Dr John R G Bradfield	[member since 1994]
[Chairmen of both CNT and URA, operating as English Partnerships, appointed from 1998]		
01/10/1998-2001	Sir Alan Cockshaw	
2002 to date	Mrs Margaret A Ford	[created Baroness Ford of Cuninghame, 2006]

Deputy Chairman:

1964 - 71	Sir Harold Banwell	
1971 - 75	Mrs B F R Paterson	[member since 1961]
1975 - 78	Colin Macpherson	[member since 1973]
1978 - 82	Gordon J Roberts	[member 1977-78, 1982-1994, knighted 1984]
1982 - 88	Arthur Jones	[member since 1980]
1988 - 92	Sir Reginald Eyre	
1992 - 96	Lord Finsberg	[died in office]
1996 - 99	Michael N Mallinson	[member since 1986]

Non-Executive Members:

1961-64	J M A Smith
1961-65	General Sir Nevil Brownjohn
1961-72	John D Russell
1964-68	Wyndham Thomas
1965-74	Robert May
1966-74	Dr W A J Chapman

1966-78	Steve R Collingwood	
1968-78	Gilbert D Hitchcock	
1970-75	P G Grimshaw	
1973-78	W F Hodson	
1974-78	A E Pegler	
1975-78	J Cousins	
1976-96	Richard B Caws	
1978-85	Lord Sefton of Garston	
1978-86	M A Hastilow	
1978-86	J N C James	
1978-94	W J Mackenzie	
1978-92	P M Vine	[died in office]
1985-95	Lord Bellwin of Leeds	
1986-92	E G Barratt	
1987-93	Richard W P Luff	[died in office]
1990-98	Brian Jenkins	[knighted 1991]
1992-98	Frank C Graves	
1992-94	Ms Wendy Luscombe	
1992-99	J Trustram Eve	
1992-98	Lady Marsh	

[Board members were appointed to both CNT and URA from 1 January 1999]

Local Committees existed in the four CNT towns until 1978, whose chairmen were members of the main Board.

CHIEF OFFICERS

Secretary:

1961-62	John Cannon	[Acting Secretary]
1962-64	Bernard J Collins	
1965-73	Frank Schaffer	

Chief Executive and Secretary:

1974-78	Malcolm G (Mac) McKenzie	
---------	--------------------------	--

Chief Executive:

1978-82	Robin M Clarke	
1982-92	David M Woodhall	
1992-99	N John Walker	[styled General Manager in 1992-93]

[chief executives of both CNT and URA as "English Partnerships" from 1999]

1999-2002	Mrs Paula M Hay-Plumb	
2003-2006	David Higgins	
2006-2007	John Calcutt	
2007 to date	John Walker	[not N John Walker of 1992-99]

Chief Officers Structure 1962-82

Chief Finance Officer:

1962-65	Edward E H Cage
1966-69	Eric Overstall
1969-82	Jeffrey N (Jeff) Kay

Chief Administrative Officer:

1962-74	Malcolm G (Mac) McKenzie
1974-82	John W (Jack) Blomeley

Chief Legal Officer:

1962-79	Alan E Ellis	[post not filled after Mr Ellis's death].
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Chief Engineer:

1969-82 Brian M Roberts

[until 1969, services were provided by a chief engineer in each town office]

Chief Architect:

1966-76 H S Howgrave-Graham

1977-81 Ken H Saunder

[also Manager, Crawley]

Regional Estates Officer:

1978-79 N E Chambers

[also Manager, Hatfield and Welwyn Garden City]

Chief Estates Officer:

[post created January 1979]

1979-82 Howard J M Thomas

Town Offices:**Crawley****Manager:**

1962-78 Robin M Clarke

1978-81 Ken H Saunders

[also Chief Architect of CNT, 1977-80]

Principal Officer:

1981-83 F P Harris

Hemel Hempstead**Manager:**

1962-69 A W Thomas

1969-78 Brigadier J R Blomfield

1978-81 J Graham Lloyd

[also Chief Engineer, Hemel Hempstead]

Hatfield and Welwyn Garden City**Manager:**

1967-78 Brigadier Michael W Biggs

1978-79 N E Chambers

1979-82 John W Hill

[also Regional Estates Manager]

Harlow**Principal Officer:**

1980-82 Gilbert T Probart

Stevenage**Principal Officer:**

1980-82 Alan B Cudmore

Corby**Manager:**

[office opened 1980 see below]

Bracknell**Principal Officer:**

1982 T J Perry

Chief Officers Structure 1982-92

In the 1982 centralisation some chief officers retired and Glen House staff were re-organised into two directorates. In 1985 a third directorate dealing with Promotion and based at Metro House was added.

Director, Finance Administrative & Legal Services (DFALS):

1982-86 Jeffrey N (Jeff) Kay

1986-92 Gilbert T C Probart [deputy 1982-86]

Director, Estates and Technical Services (DETS):

1982-92 Howard J M Thomas

Director of Promotion:

[based at CNT Property Centre, Metro House, 57/58, St. James's Street, London]

1985-88 James A Grafton

Director of Industry:

[for Corby - a joint appointment with Corby District Council]

1980-86 F H (Fred) McClenaghan

Executive Officer (Headquarters):

[post created 1988 to assist the Chief Executive with policy and corporate planning]

1988-92 David R Ludford

Local Offices Executive Officers:

Corby:

[Chisholm House, 9, Queen's Square]

Manager:

1980-84 Maurice V P Hart

Executive Officer:

1984-91 J Graham Lloyd

Northampton:

[2/3, Market Square]

1985-88 W A (Tony) Gray

Redditch:

[Highfield House, Headless Cross Drive]

1985-91 Ian McKay

Skelmersdale:

[Pennylands]

1985-89 John Leigh

1989-91 Miles V Anderson

Central Lancashire:

[Cuerdon Pavilion, Shady Lane, Bamber Bridge, Preston]

1986-92 Brian Birtwistle

Basildon:

[Gifford House, London Road, Bowers Gifford]

1986-88 Douglas Galloway [called Executive Manager]

1988-93 Harry Bacon

[Basildon Office reported to Director South at Glen House from 1993. The office closed to the public in 1994 with a residual team kept on site in the Annexe until 1997]

Washington:

[Usworth Hall, Stephenson District 12, (1988-90)
19, Parsons Road, Stephenson District 12 (1990-91)]
1988-91 John Edwards

Peterborough:

[P.O. Box 3, Stuart House, City Road]
1988-92 Paul Way

Warrington:

[office opened 1989 see below]

Telford:

[office opened 1991 see below]

Chief Officers Structure 1992-94 and 1994-98

In 1992 staff in the town offices reported both to the Executive Officer for local operational matters and to national Heads of Service in headquarters for professional and corporate matters. The national Heads of Service and local Executive Officers were re-titled in 1993 as "Directors of".

In 1994 the heads of service were abolished, with several retiring from the organisation. Executive Finance and Personnel remained as corporate functions and a corporate marketing function was created, but the other heads of service activities were devolved to the regional offices. Also, responsibility for Corby and Northampton were transferred to Milton Keynes Office which was renamed as Central Office.

Head of Planning and Architectural Services (and Deputy Chief Executive)

[Director from 1993]:

1992-94 Richard Cole

Head of Engineering Services [Director from 1993]:

1992-94 Gwyn Hinvest

Head of Property Services [Director from 1993]:

1992-94 J Graham Lloyd

Head of Corporate Services [Director from 1993]:

1992-94 David R Ludford

Head of Legal Services [Director from 1993]:

1992-94 Freddie Wild

Head of Housing [Director from 1993]:

1992-94 Mike Moss

Head of Personnel and Management Resources [Director of Personnel and Management Services from 1993]:

1992-98 Howard S Ruffman

Head of Financial Services [Director of Finance from 1993]:

1992-98 Dennis V Hone

Director Marketing:

[Directorate created 1993 to replace both the corporate use of consultants and MK Marketing Ltd. which operated in Saxon Court 1992-93 as a short-lived venture between CNT and local authorities in Milton Keynes. CNT Marketing was a corporate directorate located within the

Milton Keynes office. On David Ludford's resignation in 1997 it was renamed Business Development with Andrew Mitchell as Director – see under Chief Officers Structure 1998-99]
1993-97 David R Ludford
1997-99 Andrew G Mitchell

Regional Offices:

Warrington [known as Northern Office (1991-92) and North Office (1992-98)]:

[P.O. Box 49, New Town House, Buttermarket Street]

Executive Officer (1989-93) Director (1993-98)

1989-95 John Leigh [was Director North for CNT 1998 functions only in 1994-95 – see below]

1994-95 Chris J Mackrell [served as Director North for CNT Land functions – see below]

1995-98 Chris J Mackrell was Director West Midlands and North

Telford [West Midlands Office 1993-98]:

[Jordan House (West), Hall Court, Hall Park Way]

Executive Officer (1991-93) Director (1993-98)

1991-98 Chris J Mackrell [Director West Midlands and North 1995-98]

Milton Keynes [Central Office 1994-98]:

[Saxon Court, 502, Avebury Boulevard, Central Milton Keynes (1992-97); Central Business Exchange, 414-428, Midsummer Boulevard, Central Milton Keynes (1997-to date)]

Executive Officer (1992-93) Director (1993-98)

1992-98 John Napleton

South [based in Glen House, London]:

Executive Officer (1992-93) Director (1993-98)

1992-98 G Duncan Johnston

In July 1993 following the Government announcement of winding up CNT by 31 March 1998 CNT re-structured into two separate agencies – CNT Land and CNT 1998. CNT Land was to plan, develop, market and sell all of CNT's land holding and had its headquarters located in Milton Keynes office. CNT 1998 with its headquarters in Glen House was to dispose of all remaining built estate, community-related assets and public sector housing. Staff in all locations were assigned to each agency with those in corporate Finance and Personnel and Management Services designated as Central and Common Services. Each agency had its own board under the overall main board. Common and central services were provided to both agencies by staff in the corporate functions at Glen House and locally by support staff based in the CNT 1998 agency. The dual agency approach had more impact on paper and at board/executive level than it did to staff working on a daily basis. The placing of directorates in the agencies was as follows:

Finance - Central and Common Services, CNT Land and CNT 1998

[Director of Finance Dennis Hone served as Deputy Chief Executive CNT 1998]

Personnel and Management Services - Central and Common Services

Marketing [Business Development from 1997] - CNT Land and CNT 1998

[Director Marketing David R Ludford served as Deputy Chief Executive CNT Land from 1994-97]

North

1994-95 Director North [CNT Land] – Chris J Mackrell

1994-95 Director North [CNT 1998] – John Leigh [retired November 1995]

1995-98 Director West Midlands and North [CNT Land and CNT 1998] – Chris J Mackrell

West Midlands

1994-95 Director West Midlands [CNT Land and CNT 1998] – Chris J Mackrell

1995-98 Director West Midlands and North [CNT Land and CNT 1998] – Chris J Mackrell

Central

Director Central [CNT Land and CNT 1998] – John Napleton

South

Director South [CNT Land and CNT 1998] – G Duncan Johnston

1996 -1998 Deputy Director (1998 Agency) – John Langton

1996 -1998 Deputy Director (Land) – Roger Pidgeon

The CNT 1998 management team also included Andrew Edwards as Estates Manager, charged with disengagement tasks.

Chief Officers Structure 1998-99

With CNT given an extended life from 1998 the dual Land and 1998 Agency approach ended. The re-organised structure for CNT from 1 April 1998 had its headquarters in the office at Milton Keynes, where corporate, south and central team staff shared premises, and there was reduced emphasis on regional autonomy at Warrington and Telford. This structure lasted only twelve months, being dismantled following the merger with the URA in May 1999. Some directors kept their titles in EP as it existed in 1999-2002, but the power-base and reporting lines had changed. Five CNT directors were removed from the organisation via redundancy in 2000. The senior management team at CNT from 1 March 1998 until May 1999 were:

Director of Finance and Administration (and Deputy Chief Executive):

Dennis V Hone

Director, Business Development:

Andrew J G Mitchell

Director, Commercial Land Sales North:

Miles V Anderson [and 'Lead Director' for Warrington Office]

Director, Residential Land Sales North:

W (Bill) Fulster

Director, Planning and Technical Services West Midlands & North:

R A (Dick) Dingsdale

Director, Land Sales West Midlands:

S Elwyn Jones [and 'Lead Director' for Telford Office]

Director, Commercial Lands Sales Central:

Ron Jamieson

Director, Residential Land Sales Central:

Peter Springett

Director, Planning and Technical Services Central & South:

Mrs Jane Hamilton

Director, Land Sales South:

G Duncan Johnston

Additional Offices:

London Docklands (sub-office of Milton Keynes):

Thames Quay (1998-2000) and Orchard Place (1998-2001)

Middlesbrough (sub-office of Warrington):

(1998-2002)

APPENDIX VIII: EXAMPLES OF OFFICE HOLDING ACROSS THE ORGANISATIONS

This illustrates a common trend in the case study organisations, at board and officer level.

NB: If a peerage or knighthood was awarded to an individual whilst in office in a relevant organisation, this is recorded in brackets. Otherwise the style given is as used when the office-holding began or ended. See *Who's Who* or *Who Was Who* for further biographical details.

BOARD MEMBERS

E G Barratt

Milton Keynes Development Corporation, 1980-85.
CNT, 1986-92.

Lord Bellwin of Leeds

CNT, 1985-95.
Chairman, North Hull Housing Action Trust, 1993-98.

Lord Beveridge

Chairman, Aycliffe Development Corporation, 1947-53.
Chairman, Peterlee Development Corporation, 1949-51.

General Sir Nevil Brownjohn

Chairman, Crawley Development Corporation, 1960-62.
CNT, 1962-65.
Chairman, CNT Crawley Local Committee, 1962-65.

Michael Carr

Teesside Urban Development Corporation, 1987-98.
URA, 1993-98.

Sir Henry Chilver (created Lord Chilver, 1987)

Chairman, Milton Keynes Development Corporation, 1983-92.
Chairman, Plymouth Urban Development Corporation, 1996-98.

Dame Elizabeth Coker

Chairman, Basildon Development Corporation, 1981-86 (Deputy Chairman, 1979-81).
Chairman, Harlow Development Corporation, 1979-80.

Sir Royden Dash

Bracknell Development Corporation, 1951-53.
Chairman, Stevenage Development Corporation, 1953-62.

Sir Reginald Eyre

Chairman, Birmingham Heartlands Ltd, 1987-92.
Deputy Chairman, CNT, 1988-92.
Chairman, Birmingham Heartlands Urban Development Corporation, 1992-98.

Dr Monica Felton

Chairman, Stevenage Development Corporation, 1949-51 (Deputy Chairman, 1946-48).
Chairman, Peterlee Development Corporation 1948-49.

Francis (Frank) C Graves

Redditch Development Corporation, 1981-85.
CNT, 1992-98.

Christopher Higgins (knighted 1977)

Hemel Hempstead Development Corporation, 1947-52.

Bracknell Development Corporation, 1965-68.

Chairman, Peterborough Development Corporation, 1968-81.

Sir Lancelot Keay

Chairman, Basildon Development Corporation, 1949-54.

Chairman, Bracknell Development Corporation, 1949-59.

Sir Idris Pearce

Chairman, English Estates, 1989-94.

Deputy Chairman, URA, 1994-99.

Deputy Chairman, "English Partnerships" 1999-2000.

C Dennis Pilcher (knighted 1974)

Hemel Hempstead Development Corporation, 1949-56.

Bracknell Development Corporation 1956-67, and Chairman, 1968-71.

Chairman, CNT, 1971-78.

H Dennis Stevenson (created Lord Stevenson of Coddensham, 1999)

Chairman, Aycliffe and Peterlee Development Corporations, 1971-80.

London Docklands Urban Development Corporation, 1981-88.

URA, 1993-99.

"English Partnerships", 1999.

Richard (Dick) L Reiss

Director, Welwyn Garden City Ltd, 1920-48.

Director, Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust Ltd, 1922-59.

Hatfield and Welwyn Garden City Development Corporations, 1948-55 (Vice-Chairman, 1948-52).

Gordon J Roberts (knighted 1984)

Northampton Development Corporation, 1976-85, (Deputy Chairman, 1984-85).

CNT, 1977-94, (Deputy Chairman, 1978-82).

W H Sefton (created Lord Sefton of Garston, 1978)

Runcorn Development Corporation, 1964-81 (Deputy Chairman 1967-74, Chairman 1974-81).

CNT, 1978-85.

Deputy Chairman, Warrington and Runcorn Development Corporation, 1981-85.

Wyndham Thomas

CNT, 1963-68.

Chairman, CNT Hemel Hempstead Local Committee, 1964-68.

General Manager, Peterborough Development Corporation, 1968-83.

London Docklands Urban Development Corporation, 1981-88.

Philip M Vine

Telford Development Corporation, 1975-89.

CNT, 1978-92.

Henry W Wells (knighted 1966)

Chief Estates Officer, Ministry of Town and Country Planning, 1943-46.

Hemel Hempstead Development Corporation, 1947-50, and Chairman 1950-62.

Deputy Chairman, Bracknell Development Corporation, 1949-50.

Deputy Chairman, CNT, 1961-64, and Chairman, 1964-70.

Chairman, CNT Hemel Hempstead Local Committee, 1962-64.

SENIOR EMPLOYEES

Basil Bean

Chief Finance Officer, Northampton Development Corporation, 1969-77.
General Manager, Northampton Development Corporation, 1977-80.
Chief Executive, Merseyside Urban Development Corporation, 1980-85.

Gerald J Bryan

General Manager, Londonderry Development Commission, 1969-73.
General Manager, Bracknell Development Corporation, 1973-82.

L Austin-Crowe

Commercial Estates Officer, Harlow Development Corporation, 1955-62.
Chief Estates Surveyor, Northampton Development Corporation, 1969-80, 1984-85.
General Manager, Northampton Development Corporation, 1980-85.

Edward E H Cage

Senior/Chief Finance Officer, Crawley Development Corporation, 1948-58.
General Manager, Crawley Development Corporation, 1958-61.
Chief Finance Officer, CNT, 1961-66.
General Manager, Craigavon Development Commission, 1966-73.

Robin M Clarke

Acting Chief Executive, Crawley Development Corporation, 1961-62.
Manager CNT (Crawley), 1962-78.
Chief Executive, CNT, 1978-82.

Alan E Ellis

Chief Legal and Administrative Officer, Crawley Development Corporation, 1958-62.
Chief Legal Officer, CNT, 1962-79.

E A Ferriby

Chief Architect and Planning Officer, Glenrothes Development Corporation, 1949-50.
Chief Architect, Bracknell Development Corporation, 1950-68.

Geoffrey B S Hindley

General Manager, Hemel Hempstead Development Corporation, 1956-62.
General Manager, Hemel Hempstead, CNT, 1962.
General Manager, Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield Development Corporations, 1962-66.
Manager (Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield), CNT, 1966-67.

Leonard (Len) Mawson

Secretary, Corby Development Corporation, 1950-54.
Secretary, Redditch Development Corporation, 1964-76.

James E McComb

General Manager, Hatfield and Welwyn Garden City Development Corporations, 1948-62.
General Manager, Cwmbran Development Corporation, 1962-74.

M S Paine

Chief Estates Officer, Crawley Development Corporation, 1947-58.
Chief Estates Officer, Bracknell Development Corporation, 1959-69.

Garry Philipson

Secretary, New Towns Association, 1970-74.
General Manager/Managing Director, Aycliffe and Peterlee Development Corporations, 1974-85.

Gilbert T C Probart

Chief Finance Officer, Harlow Development Corporation, 1974-80.

Principal Officer, CNT Harlow, 1980-82.

Director of Finance, Administrative & Legal Services, CNT, 1986-92, (Deputy 1982-86).

Gordon Redfern

Chief Architect, Cwmbran Development Corporation, 1962-69.

Chief Architect and Planning Officer, Northampton Development Corporation, 1969-73.

Brian M Roberts

Engineer, Crawley Development Corporation, 1960-62.

Chief Engineer, CNT, 1969-82.

Frank Schaffer

Civil servant in Ministry of Town and Country Planning (worked on Town and Country Planning Act, 1947) and Assistant Secretary, New Towns Division, MHLG, 1943-65.

Secretary, CNT, 1965-73.

A W Thomas

General Manager, Aycliffe Development Corporation, 1948-54.

Chief Engineer, Hemel Hempstead Development Corporation, 1954-62.

Manager and Chief Engineer, CNT (Hemel Hempstead), 1962-69.

N John Walker

Director of Planning, Milton Keynes Development Corporation, 1980-87.

Deputy General Manager, Milton Keynes Development Corporation, 1987-92.

Chief Executive, CNT 1992-99.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES: UNPUBLISHED

The sources are listed by the location at the time of access. The CNT/EP Records Centre, as the main source repository, is listed first, followed by the county record offices in alphabetical order.

English Partnerships Records Centre, Stacey Bushes, Milton Keynes

These sources are arranged in three sections: development corporations; CNT; urban regeneration bodies. Further explanations are given under the section headings. Those records which do not have a storage consignment number were located amongst the Records Centre's own files and finding aids.

A) New Town Corporation (and Commission for the New Towns continuation) files:

'CNT continuation' refers to a corporation file being continued by a corporation's successor CNT local office. If the file then went on, beyond the life of the local office to Glen House headquarters, or to the combined North Office, the continuation files are listed in Section B below, covering CNT files. If a file was created in a CNT local office, it appears in Section B. The New Towns Association (NTA) files are listed here in Section A, alongside the corporations.

Bracknell Development Corporation/CNT files (1949-1983)

305-4, "Corporation Records; retention/destruction programme for", 1972-1982, consignment 3441/3/4.

702-1, "History of Bracknell", 1978-1981, consignment HQ581.

"Transfer of Housing and Associated Property pursuant to the New Towns (Amendment) Act 1976 List of Estates Folders Withdrawn from Development Corporation General Filing System and Transferred To Bracknell District Council", 1978-1983, consignment HQ716.

"Central Record Office Folders", nd [pre-1983], consignment HQ686.

"Bracknell Historic Architects Records" formerly "Architects folders", nd [pre-1983], consignment HQ686.

"Bracknell Historic Engineering records" formerly "Admin: Finance Engs. folders", nd [pre-1983], consignment HQ686.

"Summary of Corporation Records Transferred to the County Records Office, Berkshire on Dissolution", 1982, consignment HQ 716.

"Appendix "A" to Summary of Records Transferred to the County Record Office, Berkshire. Architectural Contract Documents and Contract Drawing Lists", 1982, consignment HQ 716.

"Appendix "B" to Summary of Records Transferred to County Records Office, Berkshire. Civil Engineers Contract Documents and Contract Drawing Lists", 1982, consignment HQ 716.

Central Lancashire Development Corporation/CNT files (1971-1992)

1/50, "Archives", 1985-1992, consignment 1865/13/1.

3/6/5, "C.L.N.T. Archives", 1982-1986, consignment 2067/36/5.

Corby Development Corporation/CNT files (1950-1991)

DF565C (TDA 10), "Transfer of Rented Housing . Transfer of Assets to C.D.C.", 1978-1987, consignment CB 097.

Cwmbran Development Corporation files (1949-1988)

A3, "Archives", 1985-1988, consignment CM 219.

C4a, "Correspondence Re Corporation Wind Up", 1982-1988, consignment CM 219.

C26 F1, "Corporation Wind Up", 1986-1988, consignment CM 357.

D2.1, "Disposal of Housing", 1985-1987, consignment HQ520.

T9, "Town Centre General", 1980-1988, consignment HQ517.

W2, "Wind Up", 1984-1988, consignment HQ 518.

"Commission for the New Towns", 1987-1988, consignment CM369.

"Memorandum of Agreement To Write 'A History Of Cwmbran New Town' – P Riden", 1986, consignment CM 340.

"Wind Up General Correspondence", 1986-1988, consignment CM 369.

Dawley and Telford Development Corporation files (1964-1991)

C/1/17, "Filing System and Corporation Archives and Records", 1964-1991.

D/5 series Acquisition files, 1966-1969, consignment Telford Box Number 138/9.

EMC/83 and EMC/84, Telford Development Executive Management Committee Papers, 1983-84.

Dawley Development Corporation Board Minutes and Agenda, 1963-64.

"Telford Development Corporation Central File Index", 1970-1988.

"Telford Development Corporation Records Management Centre Users Guide" [unpublished booklet, nd, c1987].

Harlow Development Corporation/CNT files (1947-1982)

202, "Dissolution of Harlow Development Corporation", 1977-1979, consignment HQ18.

N22/5/B (formerly 94/13/1), "County Archivist Records – Harlow Development Corporation From June 1978 To December 1982", 1978-1982.

S/G/101, "Corporation Archives", 1978-1979, consignment HL73.

Milton Keynes Development Corporation (MKDC) files (1967-1992)

1/15/1, "Administration – Internal Administration – Office Procedures and Circulars", 1967-1970, consignment 546/88/1.

1/15/4/1, "Administration – Internal Administration – Archives", 1981-1985.

10/12/160, "Land and Property – Resale of Property – Co-ordination of Sites To Bucks County Council", 1981-1988, consignment 901/28/9.

20/1/37, "Private Housing - Microfilming - Policy", 1983, consignment 902/6/4.

DPM/1/4/3, "Systems (Internal Files) Non-Financial Systems Land Utilisation", 1980-1983, consignment 40/17/2.

G17, "Data Protection Act", 1984-1988, consignment 740/2/2

"Contacts: Development Corporations", 1979, consignment 543/46/4.

Executive Management Committee papers on archives and records, 1984-91, consignment 770.

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"New Towns Association/Corporations", 1984-1987, consignment 314/9/4.

New Towns Association files (1970-1988)

2/10/1, "Ebenezer Howard", [containing: "Letchworth...the first Garden City celebrating eighty years of progress towards a better environment 1903-1983", The Ebenezer Howard Memorial Lecture, given by Wyndham Thomas, CBE, Hon MRTPI, at Plinston Hall, Letchworth Garden City, 12 October 1983], 1978-1983, consignment 1380/36/5.

2/11, "Overall Management & Administration of New Towns", 1975-1978, consignment 1380/36/6.

3/2/4, "Appointment of Secretary – New Towns Association", 1970-1975, consignment 1380/39/4.

"Index of Filing Themes", nd [pre-1988], consignment 3441/1/1.

Northampton Development Corporation/CNT files (1968-1988)

"Commission for the New Towns - Wind Up Arrangements NH", 1985, consignment HQ 1492.

"Files Relating To DC/CNT Northampton Held By Borough Solicitor", nd [c1985], consignment 3441/2/1.

Northampton Development Corporation Board Minutes, 1983-85, consignment NH337.

Northampton Development Corporation Management Committee Minutes, 1982-1985, consignment NH 337.

"Northampton Records", nd [c1988].

"Transfer & Wind up – NBC/NDC Meetings", 1983-1984, consignment HQ 1492.

Peterborough Development Corporation/CNT files (1968-92)

12007, "Transfer of Peterborough Records", 1989-1994, consignment 1334/84/1.

"Handover of Peterborough Development Corporation Records", 1988, consignment 1444/4/2.

"List of Contract Documents", 1988-1989.

Runcorn Development Corporation files (1964-1983)

3/2/05, "Industry – Sites – Ready Mixed Concrete Plant", 1965-1970, consignment 1862/11/2.

Skelmersdale Development Corporation/CNT files (1961-1991)

12/9/02, "Listings of Records held by L.R.O." 1985-1991, consignment 1905/1/2.

12/9/2, "Corporation/Commission Records", 1982-1997 [continued post-1991 by CNT North], consignment 1905/1/1 and 1899/99/5.

12/9/2, "Disposal of Records", 1985-1986, consignment 3260/5/2.

Stevenage Development Corporation/CNT files (1946-1982)

C66, "Corporation Records", 1978-1981.

GM1(f), "History of the Corporation – J.A.B.", 1977-1979, consignment SV 140.

Consignment CNT66/2.

"Stevenage Designation Order", consignment CNT 66/4.

"Stevenage Development Corporation Solicitor's Department Notes on Records".

Telford Development Corporation

See under Dawley.

Warrington Development Corporation/Warrington and Runcorn Development Corporation files (1968-1989)

EST 1109, "Storage of Records and Archives", 1982-1988, consignment EST Box 358/CRO5.

"Howley Archives", 1984-1987, consignment 2462/7/7.

Washington Development Corporation/CNT files (1964-1991)

"Lists of Files Sent To Warrington From Washington, October 1991", 1991, consignment 4454/10/4.

"Microfilm Record Nos EMF 6606 - ", nd [pre-1991], consignment 4454/1/9.

Washington Central Registry Index, Themes 1-19, (8 vols), nd [c1964-1988], consignment 4454/1/1-8.

B) Commission for the New Towns (CNT) files (1961-1999):

Basildon Office files (1986-1994, Residual Office 1994-97)

EM50/8, "C.N.T. Basildon Archives", 1987-1998, consignment 2807/1/2.

"Basildon – Archs. Plan Records: 1. Policy File (Inc. Housing "M" Nos., CNT charges for Plans, etc.) 2. Microfilming – "Master Roll Copies" 3. Essex Records Office Contracts 4. Sold Contracts – (Current sample) 5. Planning Records Policy File 6. Streamlining Plan Records 1989 (inc. list of separated Archs/Engnrs. Plans)", 1989-1994.

Corby Office files (1980-1991)

ANT8, "Closure of the Corby Office", 1990-1991, consignment CB 145.

AOM1, "Filing Systems – Main Registry Index", 1985-1991, consignment CB 129.

AOM3, "Office Management. Filing Systems – Destroyed List & Archives List", 1982-1989, consignment CB 130.

AOM5, "Land and Property Records", 1981-1990, consignment CB 117.

AST13, "Salaried Staff (Staff Establishment Lists)", 1985-1990, consignment CB 129.

"Corby Central File Index", 1990.

M1A, "Staff General and Procedures", 1981-1988, consignment 1533.

Crawley Office files (1962-1982)

C/6570/8, "Commission Offices Broadfield – Files and Records", 1978-1982, consignment HQ 2132.

C/6570/9, "Files Transferred to Chichester and to HQ", 1978-1982, consignment 3441/3/2.

C/6570/9/1, "Admin Department Files. Files Destroyed", 1978-1983, consignment HQ 2132.

Glen House (Headquarters) files (some being continuation files from CNT local offices) (1961-1998)

CNT Board Minutes and Papers 1962 Pages 1-213 [bound volume].

CNT Board Minutes and Papers 1972 Pages 306-630 [bound volume].

CNT Board Minutes and Papers 1989 Pages 259-870 [2 bound volumes].

CNT Board Minutes and Papers 1990 Pages 1-839 [3 bound volumes].

CNT Board Minutes and Papers 1991 Pages 679-971 [bound volume].

2-5, "Dissolution of Development Corporations – Bracknell", 1980, consignment HQ 21.

7/2, "General Managers' Committee 1982/83/84", 1982-1984, consignment CNT 470.

7/3, "Chairman's Conference 1979 & 1980 & 1981", 1979-1981, consignment CNT 470.

19/36/2, "Commission's Proposals for Future Use of Computer for Record Keeping", 1977-1979, consignment CNT 467.

73/1, "Commemoration of Commission Work", 1977, consignment CNT 289.

83/3, "Records - Public Record Office", 1982-1985.

8728, "Records", 1989-1993, consignment 1272/4/3.

11,285/3, "Telford Development Corporation – Legal Work Consultancy", 1991-1992, consignment HQ 2337.

A.3, "Proposed Supplement to Records Policy Document. LAMSAC Guidelines 1972. Institute of Secretaries Guidelines 1987. CNT Original Records Policy Document", 1987-1988, consignment 1314/17/5.

A/012/1, "Transfer Orders Welwyn and Hatfield", 1965-1966, consignment HQ 6.

AG 21, "Telelink Archives", 1986-1993, consignment 1271/50/7.

AG35, "Records Management Sub Group. Estates Admin", 1992-1993, consignment 1271/50/4.

CSR/1/2, "Records Section Correspondence file", 1989-1996, consignment 1397/4/1.

CSR/1/4, "Office Notices and Non Records Correspondence", 1993-1994, consignment 1397/4/3.

CSR/1/7, "Records Management Sub Group", 1992-1993, consignment 1250/6/3.

CSR/1/8, "Records Officer Meetings Including User Friendly Guide", 1992-1995, consignments 1397/2/2-3.

CSR/1/13, "Audit Report on Records Management", 1994-1995, consignment 1397/6/2.

CSR/4/5, "File Index Registry", nd [1970s-1980s].

CSR/6/6, "Archival Photographs", 1991, consignment 1397/5/8.

CSR/6/7, "RCHME", 1987-1990, consignment 1397/5/1.

G/A/2b, "National New Towns Centre, New Town Archive", 1987-1989, consignment 1577/2/5.

G/A/22, "Basildon Records", 1987-1991, consignment 1577/2/3.

G/A/25, "Records and Archives", 1988-1993, consignment 1577/2/4.

G/A/26B, "New Towns Urban Design Archive", 1991-1994, consignments 1396/5/1 and 1577/3/1.

G/A/82, "Records Management", 1992-1993, consignment 2189/5/1.

IR41, "Records Management", 1995, consignment 2628/40/3.

LN/D/5, "Departmental Organisation", 1980-1989, consignment HQ 2091.

LN/O/8, "Office Organisation Record Maintenance", 1990-1994, consignment HQ 2512.

N1/27 (formerly 1/39), "Commission's Estate Records", 1981-1982, consignment CNT 931.

N22/2 (formerly 83/1), "Preservation of Records", 1965-88.

N22/3 (formerly 83/1/2), "Records – Future Organisation – Working Party", 1981-1982, consignment HQ 1396.

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N22/5 (formerly 83/1/4), "Preservation of Records – County Archivists Association/N.T.A.", 1980-1983, consignment HQ 1391.

N22/5/A (formerly 83/1/5), "Preservation of Records – Stored in County Archives", 1982-1988.

OM44, "Records Glen House and towns", 1990-1991, consignment 1239/1/3.

P1, "Files in Archives", 1996-1997, consignment 2352/17/10.

RE5(a), "Records Transferred to County Archivist HAT/WGC", 1982-1990.

TM4/GEN 33 "Records Management", 1994-1996, consignment 2532/14/1.

"A J Freeman - Review Of The Records Management Function Within The Commission For The New Towns - report", 1990, consignment 3441/1/3.

"Audit No: 7060, Records Management. File 1 of 1", 1997, consignment 3588/50/4.

"Basildon Records", 1993-1996.

"CNT Records", 1988-1990, consignment 1315/14/5.

"Cwmbran File No 1", 1986-1989, consignment HQ 2189.

CNT Records Policy Document, 1987, consignment 1397/5/4.

CNT Records Policy Document Supplement, 1989, consignment 1478/16/8.

"Computerisation of Estates Records", 1986-1987, consignment HQ 1509.

"Copy of Indexes Re Destination of Plans and Information from Northampton – Drawing Office", nd [1988], consignment 3441/2/2.

DPMS document wallet of records management papers, 1994.

"DPMS Records Mgt Papers", 1988-1992.

"DPMS Papers" [regarding records management], 1996-1998, consignment 2628/40/2.
 "Future Organisation – Working Party", 1982, consignment HQ 1682.
 "HQ Glen House Records section file on Engineering Dept's records", 1989, consignment 1397/5/3.
 "Liaison Meetings Telford & Northern Office", 1990-1991, consignment HQ1927.
 "List of Closed files sent to depository", nd [1978-1982].
 "Manpower Numbers Project", 1995-1997, consignment 3603/8/2.
 "Microfilmed Records", 1990-1991.
 "Networking Records Management Word Processing Ad hoc Computers", 1991, consignment 1314/15/4.
 "Northampton Deeds. Transfer of Northampton Documents To London HQ", 1993.
 "Records", 1989-1993, consignments 1239/1/1-2, 1478/6/2.
 "Records", 1982-1983, consignment 1250/4/5.
 "Records Management Correspondence", 1990, consignment 1478/10/3.
 "Records Management Three Year Plan", 1992-1993, consignment 1250/6/2.
 "Stevenage", 1982-1989.
 "Stevenage Development Corporation, Records Deposited in the Hertfordshire Record Office by Stevenage Development Corporation, June 1980; April 1981. Official Accessions 419 and 445", 1981. "Stevenage Development Corporation, Records Deposited in the Hertfordshire Record Office by Stevenage Development Corporation, June 1980; April 1981. Official Accessions 419 and 445", 1981-1990.
 "Washington File Lists", 1991, consignment 4454/10/1.

Hemel Hempstead Office files (1962-1982)

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 "Fernville Lane Depository", 1980-1981, consignment 3441/3/5.

Milton Keynes/Central Office departmental files (1992-1998)

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 "Audit No: 7060, Records Management", 1997, consignment 3588/50/4.

North Office departmental files (1991-1998)

CLSM 464, "Records Management", 1993-1997, consignment 3282/23/1.
 Gen/11.00, "New Town Archive", 1992-1994, consignment 2045/5/1.

North Office Records files (including continuation files from earlier CNT northern town offices and development corporations)

The Records section pre-dated North Office (1991-1998) by working within CNT Warrington Office from 1989, and post-dated it in retaining a dedicated Records Liaison Officer until 2000.

1/32/16, "Records Aycliffe/Peterlee/Washington", 1988-1994.
 EST 1364, "Records General Special Vol", 1989-1994, consignment 1915/89/1-3.
 EST 1364.2, "Records Officers Meetings", 1990-1999, consignments 1915/91/1-2, 3229/33/2-3.
 EST 1364.3, "Records Management Central Index – Computerisation", 1992-1999, consignments 1915/91/3, 3229/34/1-2, 3229/35/1.
 EST 1364.4, "CNT Records Management Statistics – Internal", 1998-2000, consignment 3229/36/2.
 EST 1364.5, "Records – Review of Records", 1991-1994, consignments 3229/37/2, 3229/38/1.
 EST 1364.6, "Records Management Requests for Information (External)", 1994-1998, consignment 3229/40/1-2.
 EST 1364.7, "Records Microfilming", 1992-1994, consignment 1915/93/1.
 EST 1364.8, "Records – Students", 1990-1993, consignment 1915/93/2.
 EST 1364.9, "Durham CRO Liaison", 1994-1998, consignment 3229/40/3.
 EST 1364.10, "Durham CRO Records Deposited", 1997-1998, consignment 3229/41/1.
 EST 1364.11, "Records Management Reports", 1988-1989, consignment 1915/93/3.
 EST 1364.12, "Records Mobile Shelving", 1991-1994, consignment 1915/93/4-6.
 EST 1364.14, "Records Liaison with Lancashire County Council", 1994-1999.

EST 1364.19, "Chester Records Office General Correspondence", 1989-1997, consignment 2884/17/1.
 EST 1364.20, "Liaison with TWAS – Newcastle-upon-Tyne", 1991-1999, consignments 3229/46/1-2, 3229/47/1.
 EST 1364.20.1, "Liaison with TWAS – Destruction Lists", 1994-1997, consignment 3229/47/2.
 EST 1364.20.2, "Liaison with TWAS – Files for transfer to County Archives", 1994-1995, consignment 2884/17/2.
 EST 1364.21, "Liaison with Consultants – Mr Peter Lane", 1990-1994, consignment 2884/17/3.
 EST 1364.22, "Records – Mr. Noel Bonner", 1990-1993, consignment 2884/17/4.
 NO 44/2/12, "Central Admin / Administration Records and Archives", 1991-1997, consignment 4126/4/1.
 "1) List of Washington Files That Have Been Merged With Registry Files 2) A-Z Index – 'Green Files' Washington MVA – PEO (Former System)", nd [1991], consignment 4454/10/6.
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 "TWAS Ws REC REV TO DESTROY Copy 1 of 2", 1994, consignment 4454/1/11.
 "TWAS WS REC REV to Archive Copy 1 of 2", 1994, consignment 4454/1/12.

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99/1/3/1/4, "Finance – Director – Regional Matters – Records Management", 1998-1998, consignment 3917/2/3.
 100/1/3/4/1, "Audit – Assignments and Corporate Framework Support Systems – Records Management 1998/99", 1998-1999, consignment 4945/26/1.

Post-1998 CNT Records Management files (1998-2003)

The 105 Theme, created as part of the corporate classification scheme for the new CNT in April 1998, was replaced in 2003 by the 5 Theme to reflect the harmonised English Partnerships.

105/1/1/15, "Records Management – General and Policy – EP Merger 1999-2000: Records Issues", 1999-2000.
 105/1/11/7, "Records Management – General and Policy – Archivists – Hereford and Worcester Record Office", 1998-2003.
 105/1/11/13, "Records Management – General and Policy – Tyne and Wear Archives Service", 1998-2003.

Records Management Section, Milton Keynes (CNT Records)

The 30 Theme file series operated from 1992-1998. Files cover the work of the CNT Milton Keynes/Central Office section from 1992 and, additionally, the corporate work of the DRO from 1993. Some contain merged papers from the, mostly unreferenced, Glen House records files of Les Field and Hilary Moon (1987-1992), from the MKDC Records Centre unreferenced files (1985-1992), and from the Glen House Records section unreferenced and referenced files (1992-1996), but all files are cited as 1992-1998. The 30 Theme was replaced by the 105 Theme to reflect the new CNT when the whole organisation's filing was reclassified into a centralised corporate system from 1 April 1998.

- 30 Records
- 30/1 General and Policy
 - 1 Records Management
 - 1 CNT Policy.
 - 2 Records Management Meeting.
 - 3 Annual Reports.
 - 4 User-Friendly Guide.
 - 5 Records Liaison Officers.
 - 6 Peter Lane – Consultant.
 - 7 Reviewing [Principles & Strategy].
 - 8 Tele-Link.
 - 9 Britannia Data Management.
 - 10 Portland House Storage.
 - 11 Training.

- 12 Post-1998
 - 1 General.
 - 2 Deeds Storage.
- 13 Restructuring: 1994.
- 14 Restructuring: 1996.
- 15 Commercial Records Storage – General.
- 16 Records Management/Information Management Publications - General.
- 17 Bar Coding and Colour Coding Registry Solutions – General.
- 18 Library Collection
 - 1 General.
 - 2 Main Photographic Collection.
 - 3 Aerial Photographs.
 - 4 Videos.
 - 5 Films.
- 2 Computers
 - 1 General.
 - 2 Data Ease.
 - 3 CORA and Status.
 - 4 Computer Systems User Group.
 - 5 National Computer Systems User Group.
 - 6 Assets Database.
 - 7 E Mail.
 - 8 Electronic Document Management Systems – General.
 - 9 World Wide Web (WWW).
 - 10 DRUID.
 - 11 Deeds – Notes Database.
 - 12 Documents Database.
- 3 Public Record Office
 - 1 General.
 - 2 Returns and Reports.
 - 3 3(6) Submissions
 - 1 General.
 - 2 Central & South.
 - 3 North.
 - 4 West Midlands.
 - 4 Privileged Access.
 - 5 Association of DROs.
 - 6 Notification of Transfers to Local Record Offices.
 - 7 Role of DROs.
 - 8 Conference of Departmental Record Officers.
 - 9 Training.
 - 10 Selection and Transfers.
 - 11 Scoping Study.
- 4 Society of Archivists.
- 5 Records Management Society.
 - 1 General.
 - 2 Newsletters.
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- 7 Welsh New Towns.
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 - 2 Birmingham Heartlands.
 - 3 Black Country.
 - 4 London Docklands.
 - 5 Merseyside.
 - 6 Plymouth.
 - 7 Teesside.
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 - 2 Buckinghamshire Record Office.
 - 3 Cambridgeshire Record Office.
 - 4 Cheshire Record Office.
 - 5 Durham Record Office.
 - 6 Essex Record Office.
 - 7 Hereford and Worcester Record Office.
 - 8 Hertfordshire Record Office.
 - 9 Gwent Record Office.
 - 10 Lancashire Record Office.
 - 11 Northamptonshire Record Office.
 - 12 Shropshire Record Office.
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 - 1 General.
 - 2 Statistics.
 - 3 Microbox.
 - 4 Move to CBX: 1997.
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- 30/3 Departmental
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 - 1 General.
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 - 4 Marketing.
 - 5 Audit.
 - 6 Administration and Facilities.
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 - 8 Secretariat.
 - 9 Chief Executive.
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